

DEVELOPING A TRAINING MODEL FOR EVANGELISM
AT ST. PAUL UNITED METHODIST CHURCH,
DALLAS, TEXAS

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ABSTRACT

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The context is St. Paul United Methodist Church, Dallas, Texas. The problem was the congregation's indifference to evangelism revealed through continually declining membership. If the participants were educated about evangelism through an eight-week training program to increase their knowledge about evangelism, then they would understand that evangelism is a mission of the church and they each have a role in carrying out that mission. A mixed methodology of pre- and post-project interviews, surveys, observations, and examinations in a Bible study class format was used to expand the participants' knowledge that evangelism is the overall mission of the church.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

First, I would like to give all glory, honor and praise to my heavenly Father who spoke to me during the pandemic and told me to pursue this dream I have had for over two decades. Only by and through His grace have I been able to go forth for such a time as this.

I want to thank United Theological Seminary for providing an excellent doctoral program. The faculty and staff are so caring, loving and always have an encouraging word. My mentors, Dr. Dexter Cannon, and Dr. Charles Jackson III are just the best. What can I say, they are not loquacious, but when they speak their words deliver a message that reverberates far beyond the moment. I am grateful for my faculty advisor, Dr. Anthony LeDonne, who always responded to my emails in an expeditious manner. I am so grateful for my focus group members and the members of my cohort who helped me navigate the intricacies of the process and were always available via phone, text, or email. I am eternally grateful to the friends of United Theological Seminary whose financial support allowed me to concentrate on my project without the added encumbrance of financial distractions.

To my St. Paul United Methodist Church family, I could not have completed this doctoral program without you. My pastor, Rev. Dr. Lucretia Facen was always encouraging, always available to chat, always providing valuable insight into people, places, and things to assist me, I am grateful. All clergy, Pastor Preston Weaver, Pastor

Harold Stinson, Pastor Jeannette Cobbins, Pastor Angela Williams, and Pastor Darlene Cain LeBlanc were always ready, willing, and able to offer prayer or just a word of encouragement. To every member of the congregation, my heart is so full for how you supported me along this journey. I did not walk this walk by myself, but each of you carried me at least a step or two along the way.

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I must acknowledge my wonderful doctors: Dr. Stowe, Dr. Gwin, Dr. Natalia and Dr. Jason who helped nurse me back to health after multiple automobile accidents. They were there encouraging me and doing everything within their power to help me become pain free so that I could concentrate on my studies. My gratitude knows no bounds.

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DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to Dwayne Mitchell, who has brought balance to my life throughout this journey. My children, Dawn E. Freeman and Dominick J. Hunter and my four wonderful grandchildren: Dominick Hunter Jr., Isaiah Freeman, Elijah Tynes-Freeman, and Sariah Tynes-Freeman. And all my wonderful cousins who have my back. I love you all beyond infinity.

ABBREVIATIONS

AMP	Amplified Bible
CBT	Cognitive Behavioral Theory
CBT	Cognitive Behavioral Therapy
SMU	Southern Methodist University

Prayer is crucial in evangelism: Only God can change the heart of someone who is in rebellion against Him. No matter how logical our arguments or how fervent our appeals, our words will accomplish nothing unless God's Spirit prepares the way.

—Billy Graham, *Billy Graham Library Blog*

INTRODUCTION

Celebrating 150 years of existence is no small feat, it is a major accomplishment and should be heralded in the grandest of fashions with all the pomp and circumstance possible to express gratitude for hard fought victories throughout the annals of time. But as with anything that has aged, it becomes more and more difficult to gloss over the signs of time and one begins to see the fine lines and cracks in the foundation that threaten its structural integrity. We can all attest to that fact regarding a physical building and even our physical bodies, but time and wear can also erode a ministry that has persevered for over 150 years.

St. Paul United Methodist Church has certainly been at the forefront of great and mighty things as well as historical events of significance to Dallas, Texas. From a small church in the middle of a small black community that has remained embedded in what is now the heart of the largest Arts District in the country St. Paul United Methodist Church can boast of a life well lived. Perhaps, in the busy-ness of ministry one of the most important aspects of ministry appeared to have been relegated to a place of lesser importance and that is the church's evangelistic witness. For St. Paul United Methodist Church this has been evidenced primarily by a steady decline in church membership since 1971 when it claimed its pinnacle of 1675 members.

The absence of a viable evangelistic ministry highlights that somewhere through the years, this ceased to be a priority. The North Texas Conference of the United

Methodist Church attempted to alleviate the problem by having a young charismatic preacher who had founded a non-denominational church merge his congregation with St. Paul United Methodist Church to combat the decline. The solution worked well until the pastor accepted an appointment to a different church in the middle of the 2020 coronavirus pandemic. Returning to a completely different church after the pandemic had a traumatic effect upon the congregants. Change is needed, but it can only be accomplished by educating the congregants about the church's mission and teaching them that they, the membership, are an integral part of the gospel message, which in turn would be sufficient to rekindle the passion that inspired a body of believers to gather under a brush arbor and establish the church 150 years ago.

Throughout the history of this context, the church's identity has been correlated to whoever was the current pastor and had not taken on an identity of its own. While this is acceptable it has not set a foundation that will sustain the church beyond the next pastor. This could be attributed to the itinerant system for clergy in some way. The church's historical foundation should be enough to support its own identity, but this is not the case. Most church members have been members since the early to mid-twentieth Century and they understand that the church is declining but are helpless to do anything about it because there has not been a systematic method of training the congregation to support and carry out the church's mission.

There is a strong sense of family within the congregation. The members are genuine in their love and caring for one another and guests. It is quite apparent that St. Paul United Methodist Church would have ceased to exist decades ago if not for the faithfulness and genuine love the members have for the church. Thus, my doctoral

research project, “Developing a Training Model for Evangelism at St. Paul United Methodist Church, Dallas, Texas,” was designed to equip the congregation with the knowledge and education about evangelism and discipleship that can aid in the church’s growth and keep the church viable. Employing Jesus’ teaching model after His resurrection was used to emphasize how Jesus moved the disciples beyond their grief at His death to their purpose of spreading Jesus’ message of love and salvation. The next segment reflects the extensive research that went into the preparation of the biblical, historical, theological, and interdisciplinary foundation chapters that emphasize the value of my hypothesis and corroborate my research project.

The pericope for chapter two, Biblical Foundation is Acts 1:1-8 which contains the last words of Jesus to the disciples after His resurrection and prior to His ascension. Jesus’ methodology was simple as He taught and expounded upon the words contained in the Bible which speak of the Father and the Kingdom of God which He came to proclaim, His role in the story and what was to come. The key elements contained within this pericope were to ascertain whether the disciples really believed that Jesus Christ had risen from the dead. Without belief in the risen Savior, there can be no witness to lead others to salvation. During His forty days with the disciples Jesus made sure the disciples understood that this mission was to be accomplished with the help of the Holy Spirit. With these elements addressed then the congregation would attain greater acuity regarding their origins, the need for evangelism and what they are to do to carry out the mission of the church.

Chapter three, the historical foundation provides an extensive examination of John Wesley and his brand of evangelism. Perusing his character, life, skills, and the

abilities that he possessed that were contributory in the formation of the Methodist denomination. John Wesley himself was the epitome of a great disciple in that his life was never about seeking the limelight, fame, nor fortune, rather his methodology, his lifestyle, and his teachings were the result of his journey to salvation. He was autonomous in his pursuit of salvation and a holy life. Wesley placed an extraordinary amount of emphasis upon prayer in his life. Wesley appeared to understand that prayer was the centering and essence from which a holy life could be obtained. Wesley's method of evangelism was steeped in prayer, truly it would be rather difficult to promote the gospel message if it is not borne in prayer.

The tenets of evangelical theology in chapter four were determined to be the most effective theological discipline that informed this doctoral research project. Evangelical theology examines and scrutinizes the gospel message by providing lucidity to the biblical story and all facets of the scriptures from the Old Testament to the New Testament in how God's plan for us was carried out through His Son, Jesus Christ. There are many beliefs associated with evangelical theology, but the prevailing focal point for this Doctor of Ministry project, "Developing a Training Model for Evangelism at St. Paul United Methodist Church, Dallas, Texas" is reliant upon the evangelical theology that promotes the gospel as the chief mission of the church which stresses repentance (being born again), the importance of evangelism, and the traditional Christian teachings about the authority of the Bible. Because essentially theology is faith seeking understanding through which every age reflects, based on its existence and the content of its message

about the good news of salvation, and how the Bible is the inspired word of God and bears witness of itself.¹

The interdisciplinary foundation of Cognitive Behavioral Theory (CBT) was chosen because it is rooted in the fundamental principle that an individual's cognitions play a significant role in the development and maintenance of emotional and behavioral responses to life situations. In CBT models cognitive processes, in the form of meanings, judgments, appraisals, and assumptions associated with specific life events, are the primary determinants of one's feelings and actions and can either facilitate or hinder the process of adaptation. CBT treatment plans are based on an ever-evolving cognitive conceptualization, which means it can be adjusted for the individual and/or the situation and it is culturally adaptable. This enabled this doctoral research project to be adaptable to everyone without having to write a specific plan for each participant. A prime benefit of CBT is that it stresses collaboration and active participation which encourages the individual by promoting an ambition, goal or any kind of desired end that might be achieved through personal effort. As facilitator of the classes the participants were led into lively discussions and were able to gain valuable insight into how they each had viewed the gospel message.

Each of these foundational chapters: biblical, historical, theological, and interdisciplinary bolster and enlighten this Doctor of Ministry research project, "Developing a Training Model for Evangelism at St. Paul United Methodist Church, Dallas, Texas."

¹ Thomas, Owen C, and Ellen K Wondra, "Introduction to Theology," 3rd ed. (Harrisburg, PA: Morehouse, 2002), 1.

CHAPTER ONE

MINISTRY FOCUS

Introduction

This chapter will identify how my spiritual journey, education, skills, and abilities were uniquely aligned by God to coincide with the needs of this ministry context. It will highlight how the melding of my journey and the needs of the church come together to provide the foundation for this doctoral research project. It is to be noted that two very specific needs in the context were a clear match to my spiritual journey and professional development. This chapter will also identify the statement of theme and the hypothesis for my doctoral research project. This introduction will advise how I came to be a member of this context. The second section examines the context, my ministry journey and the synergy that elicited this Doctor of Ministry Research Project. The final section summarizes this chapter and how God orchestrated my life to become a part of St. Paul United Methodist Church for such a time as this.

It took two years of petitioning the Lord in prayer to find my current context. My desire was to become a part of a church that still believed in preaching the pure unadulterated word of God and worshiped God and not money. I am grateful that I joined with St. Paul United Methodist Church as a member and not in the capacity of a ministry assignment because it has afforded me the ability to witness and experience the culture as “one of them.” When one comes to a church in any type of leadership role, there will be members that one gets to know due to a working relationship and there will be members

that one will only see or greet in passing. I am reminded of one night in Women's Bible Study where a visitor, who had been invited by the facilitator, was trying to find a seat. The facilitator told her guest to sit next to me because as a pastor I would not bite, and the young lady got up from her seat and almost ran to another seat. Eventually, she came back and sat next to me. My point being that people look at clergy in a different light. My prayer had been to unite with a church that was still grounded in the biblical principles and foundation of making disciples, with a lot less emphasis upon total membership numbers and one's financial position. Not that membership, tithes, and offerings are not vital to a church's existence, but when it becomes more important than the gospel, there is a problem. Past experiences had me watching in disbelief as the ministry's focus of bringing in money was more important than evangelizing, teaching, and preaching the word of God.

This context was not within my purview when searching for a new church home as I had never heard of its existence. I attended the service with my daughter because she and the pastor were working together on social justice issues. She did tell me that she had told the pastor that I was a minister and was searching for a church home, but there was no pressure to join. Upon entering the door of the building, the love of God and the love of neighbor were so ubiquitous that it literally embraced you! My daughter and I both joined the church that day. The Pastor and I had a couple of meetings to discuss my role at the church. "A man's gift [given in love or courtesy] makes room for him..." (Prov. 18:16a, AMP). I was asked to attend the yearly leadership meeting, even though I was a new member and not in any leadership role. As the pastor introduced his vision for the church in 2020, he asked for three people to pray - each for a specific thing, and I chose

to pray for the second thing. I do not remember what it was I was praying for, but I offered prayer.

After the opening devotions and prayer, we were divided into groups representing each ministry. A member of the prayer ministry asked me to sit with them, the ministry leader was not in attendance. The member that asked me to sit with the group stated they would like me to join the prayer ministry, but it would have to be approved by the leader. I said yes, because prayer had been a part of my life since I was a little girl. A few days later, I received a call from the prayer ministry leader asking if I would be willing to take over as the leader because he no longer wanted to lead. I told him I would be interested but wanted to know and follow the proper protocol for this to occur, as I believed this should come from the pastor. Several days later the pastor called me and asked me to submit my vision for the prayer ministry and asked if I would be willing to lead the prayer ministry, and I advised that I would. After several months, a formal announcement was made to the church, and I had my first meeting with the prayer ministry as their leader on February 29, 2020.

My immediate concerns were that the prayer ministry did not pray together. The Bible states: “Therefore, confess your sins to one another, and pray for one another, so that you may be healed. The effective prayer of a righteous man can accomplish much” (Jas. 5:16). Instead, a member of the prayer ministry would send out a group text whenever there was a prayer concern. I could not determine whether everyone in the prayer ministry had regular or daily personal prayer time. The word of God informs that we stand in the need of prayer: “And in the same way the Spirit also helps our weakness; for we do not know how to pray as we should, but the Spirit Himself intercedes for us

with groanings too deep for words; and He who searches the hearts knows what the mind of the Spirit is, because He intercedes for the saints according to the will of God” (Rom. 8:26-27). I was experiencing a very loving church standing in need of prayer.

In meeting with the prayer ministry, I felt it necessary to reiterate that this church could not have remained viable for 150 years without prayer. “Intentional prayer” was instituted whereby the prayer ministry members were to devote themselves to a specific time every day to pray. With a focus on praying for the pastor, pastor’s family, the pastor’s vision for the church, church finances, prayer for the church as a whole and other prayer concerns that each felt needed to be included. The prayer ministry was to fast one day a week as the ministry sought to become a united and cohesive front for the church. The pastor had instituted a congregational prayer call several months earlier, which was facilitated on Thursday mornings at 7:30 a.m. and that call was to continue. Shortly after my appointment as leader of the prayer ministry, the world was literally shut down due to the Corona virus pandemic.

While the focal point of this doctoral research project is evangelism, prayer is every bit as vital as knowing and understanding the scriptures because the Bible clearly delineates that Jesus did not do anything without praying. The two are intertwined and there can be no separation. Therefore, this doctoral research project included gathering the participants into a posture of prayer that would strengthen their spiritual walk, as well as become a foundation for an evangelistic witness borne from an increased knowledge and awareness of who Jesus is and the great commission Jesus placed upon every one of His followers.

Context Review

In 1873, several inhabitants of Freedman's Town, a community of recently freed enslaved people from Mississippi, Louisiana, and Texas just north of the Dallas city limits, met with Methodist ministers Reverend H. Oliver and Reverend William Bush under a brush arbor to organize the area's first African American Methodist Episcopal Church. Established near a slave cemetery following the Civil War's close in 1865, Freedman's Town grew as Black people from rural areas arrived, attracted by work in and near the community laying tracks and conducting engines for the Houston and Texas Central and the Texas and Pacific railroad companies. The area was not an incorporated part of Dallas at the time, and the Black residents maintained the segregated area as an economic and political safe haven. Whenever any of the Black residents crossed from this community into Dallas, they were frequently arrested for vagrancy.² St. Paul United Methodist Church's first building, a small frame sanctuary, was purchased through a \$250 grant made by the Board of Missions of the Methodist Church in Philadelphia on April 14, 1874, serving as a sanctuary and a school until the first school for Black children opened in early 1884.

After the wood structure burned down, a brick building was erected in the late 1880s. According to oral history, construction on the church's landmark building began in 1901 by digging and finishing a concrete base, called "Noah's Ark."³ It took twenty-six years to complete the rest of the church as bricks used for the building were either

² Walton Muyumba, "St. Paul United Methodist Church Is the Soul of the Arts District," *D Magazine*, July 21, 2010, <https://www.dmagazine.com/publications/d-magazine/2010/august/st-paul-united-methodist-church-in-dallas/>.

³ U S Dept of the Interior, National Park Service, National Register of Historic Places Registration Form, 12-27-2016, Sect. 8, 39.

purchased through fundraising programs or congregants individually collected loose bricks to complete sections of the church.

When St. Paul United Methodist Church was completed, it stood as one of the most dominating institutions in Freedman's Town, a cultural and religious center.⁴ As with most Black churches that existed during the post-slavery days, St. Paul United Methodist Church was instrumental in establishing schools and being a resource for the Black community to gather as they sought to establish homes, and businesses. St. Paul United Methodist Church was recognized as a monument to cooperation between the races during the Civil Rights Movement. Interracial services between St. Paul United Methodist Church and other Methodist congregations began as early as 1952.⁵ With its peak membership of over 1600 people, St. Paul obtained financing to build affordable housing in 1963, even though most of the congregation lived well outside of the West Dallas neighborhood where the apartments would be built.⁶

St. Paul United Methodist Church is one of only three institutional buildings left of Freedman's Town, and the only one serving its original purpose. While the community relocated to different areas of Dallas, they continued to come to St. Paul to worship. Despite its successful ministry and ability to reach beyond its neighborhood, St. Paul United Methodist Church was severely affected by two projects that virtually isolated it from much of Dallas. Developments that would slowly change and finally remove virtually all evidence of the once vibrant community of Freedman's Town/North Dallas

⁴ Muyumba, "St. Paul United Methodist Church Is the Soul of the Arts District."

⁵ Quimby McCoy, "History of St. Paul United Methodist Church," Preservation Architecture LLP, May 11, 2008, 6.

⁶ McCoy, "History of St. Paul United Methodist Church," 7.

began with the late 1930s demolition of housing to make way for the housing project called Roseland Homes and the 1949 construction of the first segment of the North Central Expressway, which created a physical barrier through the community. Later, Woodall Rodgers Freeway was constructed further changing the landscape of the neighborhood as it demolished much of the rest of the “North Dallas” residential neighborhood, which resulted in St. Paul United Methodist Church being located adjacent to a highway.

In the 1960s, the congregation contemplated moving away from downtown but decided against it. What was once a thriving Black community is now an urban Arts District reported to be the largest arts district in the country. The church is now surrounded by symphony halls, museums, restaurants, and luxury high-rise apartments. Thriving as a church has been a challenge, given the neighborhood’s transformed demographics and place in the middle of the arts district. One of the first endeavors by the 750-member congregation was to establish a social outreach, art, and meal program for the homeless called Body and Soul Ministries in 1997, feeding approximately 125 people upon its inauguration, and it is still operating today.⁷

Through the years, membership continued to decline. Bishop Michael McKee of the North Texas Annual Conference served together with Pastor Richie Butler on the executive board of the Perkins School of Theology at Southern Methodist University (SMU) and on the SMU trustee board. Pastor Butler had founded Union Cathedral, a nondenominational church in 2002. One day Bishop McKee asked Pastor Butler why he was not a United Methodist and Butler’s reply was that no one had ever asked him. Their

⁷ McCoy, “History of St. Paul United Methodist Church,” 9.

talks led to Pastor Butler accepting Bishop McKee's invitation to transfer his denominational ministerial credentials to United Methodist and to becoming St. Paul United Methodist Church's pastor. In September 2014, Pastor Butler was formally installed as the thirty-fifth Pastor of St. Paul United Methodist Church. The move was historic beyond the fact of bringing in a new young pastor to invigorate the church whose membership had dwindled to about 130 members. It was the fact that he brought most of his 300 plus members from Union Cathedral to merge with St. Paul United Methodist Church.⁸ Pastor Butler was just what was needed at St. Paul United Methodist Church; bringing in this charismatic and dynamic pastor saw attendance more than double during that inaugural year, and new members from the community were dropping in and deciding to become part of the great legacy at St. Paul. Under Pastor Butler's leadership, St. Paul United Methodist Church experienced spiritual renewal, financial growth, and had begun to emerge as a community leader on social issues.

March of 2020 brought the world to a standstill when the Covid-19 pandemic interrupted life as we knew it.⁹ The last in-person worship service was held on March 15, 2020, and we watched as the world shut down to avert the spread of the deadly disease. The North Texas Conference of the United Methodist Church requested that the churches close until a determination could be made on the next steps. Just like that, the church was

⁸ James Ragland, "New Pastor Brings Fresh Vision, New Flock to Dallas' St. Paul UMC," *Dallas Morning News* (Sept. 28, 2014), <https://www.dallasnews.com/news/2014/09/29/new-pastor-brings-fresh-vision-new-flock-to-dallas-st-paul-umc/>.

⁹ Grant D. Jacobsen and Kathryn H. Jacobsen, "Statewide COVID-19 Stay-at-Home Orders and Population Mobility in the United States," *World Med & Health Policy* 12, no. 4 (July 10, 2020), <https://doi.org/10.1002/wmh3.350>.

forced into unchartered territory. The Lord's church had been able to overcome and withstand many events, but this one took it by surprise.

One of the distinct advantages of the twenty-first century was the advancement of technology and social media platforms. There were numerous churches across the country that streamed their services through various social media platforms, but St. Paul United Methodist Church was not one of them. It had been an idea discussed numerous times but had never actually made it to the activation phase. It is amazing how God can cause things to change when the need arises. By the next Sunday morning, worship services had been recorded and were being streamed via YouTube. The broadcast was elementary, but it served to keep the congregation engaged and allowed the pastor to stay in contact with the members. It honestly turned into quite a blessing as the Sunday school and Bible study ministries were organized and meetings were held via Zoom. The church saw a significant increase in viewers to the biblical studies, which led to an increase in viewers to the Sunday morning worship services.

Pastor Butler and I met to discuss prayer during that time. We both felt it was essential that the church enter a posture of prayer to support and encourage the congregation as we all walked into the unknown. After discussions with the Prayer Ministry team, we proposed a plan to offer prayer three times a day, Monday through Friday via the church's prayer conference call line. The times were set to allow everyone an opportunity to be a part of at least one prayer call each day. The facilitators were both clergy and lay members. The format was simple in that there was a daily scriptural focus, which the facilitators would summarize the scripture and then ask for prayer requests and praise reports. This ministry has been in existence since March 2020 and has become an

integral part of St. Paul United Methodist Church with people calling in from all over the country as well as St. Paul members. The prayer ministry has grown from nine members to twenty-six. What is important to note is that the younger adults of the church did not and still do not participate in the prayer calls. The few young adults that do attend are there because they are very active with the Body and Soul Ministry. Training them about evangelism would be instrumental in preparing these few young adults to share their witness with other young adults.

In May of 2020, St. Paul United Methodist Church experienced another devastating event, Pastor Butler accepted the assignment to pastor at a different church effective July 2020. United Methodist pastors are itinerant, “itinerancy” refers specifically to the commitment by pastors to go and serve wherever their bishops send them. Clergy in The United Methodist Church commit to serve where their bishop appoints them. Appointments are typically for one year at a time, though the bishop may move any itinerant pastor at any time. The goal of the appointment process is to match as much as possible the gifts and graces of a particular pastor or deacon with the ministry needs of a particular congregation or ministry setting. In this “serial leadership” of consecutive pastors and deacons (no two are alike) over time, the combination of skills blends to form a broad base of developed ministries. While bishops make appointments, they incorporate a consultative process outlined in *The Book of Discipline* that includes district superintendents, clergy, and pastor/staff parish relations committees. The needs and desires of clergy are considered, but the mission of the church comes first.¹⁰ On July

¹⁰ ResourceUMC.org, “To be United Methodist: What is Itineracy?” *Interpreter Magazine* (June 2015), <https://www.resourceumc.org/en/content/to-be-united-methodist-what-is-itineracy/>.

1, 2020, Reverend Doctor Lucretia Facen became St. Paul United Methodist Church's thirty-sixth and second female pastor.

Due to the church being physically shuttered because of the pandemic, the impact of Pastor Butler leaving had yet to be realized. But one could be assured that the members that followed him from his church originally had followed him to his new church. St. Paul United Methodist Church was left to contend with a smaller congregation without an evangelistic plan in place. Current membership is approximately one hundred members of which 97% are black, 2% are Caucasian and 1% Hispanic with approximately fifty to seventy-five members in attendance on any given Sunday. The need to encourage the congregants to "make disciples" can only be accomplished through foundational teaching on the church's mission as commanded by Jesus in Matthew 28:18-20 and through prayer for God's guidance.

Ministry Journey Review

Since the age of eight when God spoke to me and told me He had a purpose for my life, I have talked to God. One thing I was assured of was that He was with me, and I was not alone. Because of this, we have a relationship that lets me know that He is always with me. I have sought to find out that purpose all my life. Even as I attended seminary for my master's degree, I felt out of place because everyone knew what they were going to do or where their plans were to lead them, but I did not have a clue. I was just obedient to the Holy Spirit and completed my studies and knew that God would tell me in His time. It is in my pursuit of this doctoral degree that God has opened my eyes to the reality that I had been walking in my purpose the entire time. The Lord revealed to

me that my walk was not the popular walk, nor the expected route, people would not understand and would think of my purpose as inconsequential. But my purpose and my calling are needed and necessary to the body of Christ, without which others will find it hard to walk in their calling and purpose.

As I wrote my Spiritual Autobiography and looked at where I am now, I could clearly see the direction God had taken me. The path was not clear as I listened to hear God direct me to this or that purpose, and I believe God purposely did not highlight it because it was so much more effective when I just walked in it. It tended to be something that I just walked in naturally and something I did without hesitation. I always wondered why young people would come to me to talk about issues with their parents or other people or situations in their life, as if I were a life coach. But God would always give me a word for them, and I would pray for them. Neighbors would come and ask me to pray for them through various trials.

I spent seventeen years in the Pentecostal faith where I sought to know about the God that saved a wretch like me. It was there in constant prayer I learned about God my Father, Jesus the Son, and the Holy Spirit. I received extensive training in leading worship as two of my former pastors were recording artists. I led or was part of the women's ministry as well as the District Missionaries of the Churches of God in Christ. I helped in establishing and organizing evangelism ministries and programs both at the local church level and district wide, in which the key element was prayer. Anyone wishing to become part of an evangelism ministry must commit themselves to prayer to establish and maintain that relational connection to God. I taught Sunday school classes and was appointed the school administrator and secretary for a Bible institute. I also

helped plan and organize church and tent revivals. I wrote a New Disciples Manual which taught the process, aspects, and benefits of discipleship, but more importantly, what the Bible outlined for disciples of Christ. It was during my season as a member of this denomination that God spoke to me via Acts 20:24, “But I do not consider my life of any account as dear to myself, in order that I may finish my course, and the ministry which I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify solemnly of the gospel of the grace of God,” calling me to preach the gospel in 1983. I did not know that it would be one of the most exhaustive experiences of my life as it took sixteen years and a change of denomination before I would be licensed to preach the gospel.

My call and purpose in ministry are to prayer. Prayer informs my spiritual walk and has allowed me to develop a prayer seminar and lessons on intercessory prayer, having received teaching at my former churches about personal prayer and intercessory prayer. Understand that this is not boasting nor is it a promotion of my abilities, instead it is stated to inform that everyone can walk in relationship with God through prayer and trust in Him. Jesus said,

And when you pray, you are not to be as the hypocrites; for they love to stand and pray in the synagogues and on the street corners, to be seen by men. Truly I say to you, they have their reward in full. But when you pray, go into your inner room, and when you have shut your door, pray to your Father who is in secret, and your Father who sees in secret will repay you. And when you are praying do not use meaningless repetition, as the Gentiles do, for they suppose that they will be heard for their many words. Therefore, do not be like them; for your Father knows what you need, before you ask Him (Matt. 6:5-8 NASB).

All churches started from a posture of prayer, if you delve into the history of any church, you will find that there was a lot of time spent in prayer seeking direction from God. The Black church could not have survived slavery, Jim Crow, the KKK, the constant forms of oppression and systemic racism without prayer. My context could not

have stood for 150 years without prayer. The need for prayer within the church to lift the pastor, the pastor's vision for the church, the mission of the church, the members of the church - even the building itself is necessary for any evangelistic witness to take place.

What is prevalent in churches today is an awareness of the need for that prayer, but with demands in so many aspects of ministry the significance of prayer has been diminished. Trends in recent years have been to move beyond an opening devotional period for the sake of time. Many churches have stopped physically meeting at the church for prayer instead opting for prayer conference calls because they are too busy to physically come to the church. The times we live in may also have some bearing upon this aspect after the nine church members were killed during Bible study at their church in Charleston, South Carolina, with safety being a concern. But this just serves to identify the need for prayer more than ever. Just as vital is the need for those undertaking to establish an evangelistic ministry to spend time in prayer together seeking understanding and guidance from the Lord so that their spirit will be in one accord.

Personal prayer is vital to keep us connected to God, to find that release from the stresses we encounter every day and receive direction from the Lord. This is especially true for ministry leaders in the church to be able to hear from God and to submit themselves to God. For some reason, the responsibility for God's church has shifted solely on the shoulders of the pastor. But this is not and never has been God's plan.

It was He who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers, to prepare God's people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of fullness of Christ (Eph. 4:11-13, NIV).

It is time for the church to get back to the basics and do what the apostles did in establishing the Christian church, “But we will devote ourselves to prayer, and to the ministry of the word” (Acts 6:4). Since we identify ourselves as Christians, which means followers of Christ, we should as well. The body of Christ, the Church needs to understand the importance of prayer in the mission of the church and the need to pray that God strengthens, encourages, and speaks to us regarding the needs of the church’s ministry. Instrumental in any evangelism ministry is the need to know and understand what the Bible says to carry out its purpose.

Synergy

And Jesus came up and spoke to them, saying, ‘All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age (Mt 28:18-20 NASB).

Matthew 28:18-20 is the great commission that Jesus bestowed upon the apostles. The mission is the same today as it was when Jesus breathed those words. We have been empowered to carry out this mission by the authority of Jesus Christ through the Holy Spirit. Jesus took considerable time teaching the disciples about the kingdom of God and His purpose on the earth. But somewhere in the life of this church we ceased teaching about the kingdom of God. When a church finds itself at a point of a slow agonizing death, it becomes necessary to research the cause. For my context there have been several causative factors throughout the years with varied attempts to rectify the decline. However, the issue is reaching a critical stage, and measures need to be put in place immediately to turn the situation around. Thus, my research project, “Developing a

Training Model for Evangelism at St. Paul United Methodist Church, Dallas, Texas,” will demonstrate that teaching about evangelism can equip the congregation to keep the church viable and aid in its growth through their witness. Evangelism is simply the sharing of the gospel message. More importantly the congregants by becoming disciples themselves as they gain this knowledge, will then help to make disciples whether the new disciples become members of St. Paul United Methodist Church or not (which is the goal of evangelistic ministry), truly sheep beget sheep. It is vitally important that a correlation between the ills of today’s society and how the gospel message can speak to them.

There is currently no active evangelism ministry within the context of the church. The church does have a social justice ministry which could be a source of bringing in souls but has not been considered as an evangelistic ministry. The Body and Soul Ministry, a ministry to our unsheltered community, is regularly active and continued to operate through the pandemic, but only one or two of the unsheltered being served attend worship services at any given time. St. Paul United Methodist Church has a ministry in conjunction with the Booker T. Washington High School for the Visual and Performing Arts called “Walk Over Wednesday” where the students from the high school are invited to St. Paul for snacks and fellowship, but most students attend church services with their parents and those who come to St. Paul on occasion are not members of St. Paul United Methodist Church. There was a Bible study ministry at Southern Methodist University Perkins School of Theology, which was started just before the pandemic. This resulted in some of the students visiting the church, but not joining with the church. That ministry ended with the pandemic.

Each of these ministries is vital and serves a purpose but is not leading to increased membership. The older members struggle with the changes that have taken place over the years and tend to want to go back to the way things used to be. There is a wistfulness in their eyes as they talk about the good old days. These types of events can produce a devastating effect upon the congregants and their beliefs. And just as the congregation is dealing with these types of traumas, so, too, are those that we seek to witness to. How the gospel message is taught can be used as an instrument to provide a point of reference or a shared experience that would open the door to an opportunity to witness.

While increased membership is the ideal goal for this Doctor of Ministry Project, teaching the membership about the church's mission will be far more rewarding and reap greater benefits in the years to come. A clear-cut plan for a viable evangelistic ministry is needed if St. Paul United Methodist Church is to remain an active church. One would think that the need for a viable evangelistic ministry would be the theme of my research project, it is not. Merely formulating a ministry without an understanding of what the ministry is for or why the ministry is needed is doomed to failure before it begins. Rather, the theme for my research project is that an evangelistic ministry can only be viable when the congregation is enlightened about the fact that the primary mission of the church is to be witnesses of Jesus Christ. There is a need for St. Paul United Methodist Church to be devoted to the common goal of being witnesses of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. It became clear as the church prepared to celebrate 150 years of ministry that the congregation's vision was much more focused on the past and not on what this august body rich in historical victories can overcome for the future. The changes, the challenges,

the losses, the defeats and even the victories have worn this congregation down and there is a weariness within them even amid celebration. No amount of cheering and talking will ignite the passion needed to press forward without personal conviction becoming part of their very soul. Again, prayer is vital as it is the key to understanding the scriptures and the mission. When the scriptures are read and studied, one should constantly ask the Spirit to help our understanding and how to apply the text to our lives.

This highlighted the need to reach out to the members of the church. Dr. Charles J.J. Jackson III explains in his book, *Outreach Theology: Transitioning the Traditional Church* that “ministering to people within the church is what I call ‘in reach.’ In reach is not easy because it causes the church and its administration to review its deficiencies.”¹¹ With the church’s primary mission and that of the United Methodist faith to make disciples, teaching the congregants the way that Jesus taught the disciples after His resurrection should kindle a fire within them to share the good news of the gospel which in turn makes disciples. Just as Jesus had to guide the disciples beyond their grief, the same needs to be done at St. Paul United Methodist Church.

To achieve this goal, we must first identify the key factors that have prevented the church from having an evangelism ministry. My observations show that the congregants have not received teaching on the church’s mission (the great commission) nor the congregants’ roles and responsibilities. Thus, my hypothesis is that undergoing eight weeks of study on evangelism and prayer would increase the congregants’ understanding about the mission of the church and their respective roles. This research project was

¹¹ Charles J. J. Jackson, III, *Outreach Theology: Transitioning the Traditional Church* (Carol Stream, IL: Xulon Press, 2010), 65.

designed to teach the identical lesson that Jesus taught the disciples about who He is and why He came.

Conclusion

In summary, I believe that the skills and training I have acquired through my years of work in evangelistic ministry will enable me to provide the biblical study that St. Paul United Methodist Church stands in the need of to enable the congregation of this 150-year-old African American church and historical landmark in the city of Dallas, Texas to learn what it means to be a disciple and understand that the mission of the church is to be witnesses which is needed in order to make disciples. Throughout the years of my walk with the Lord, I trusted that He was ordering my steps and has led me to this place, both spiritually and physically to carry out this mission for St. Paul United Methodist Church.

I believe that my educational background, my work in ministry and more specifically my experiences with many denominations have prepared me to overcome the various stumbling blocks and trials that may manifest themselves while conducting this research. I believe my compassion for souls has been ordained by God to lead me to this context and that my doctoral research project, “Developing a Training Model for Evangelism at St. Paul United Methodist Church, Dallas, Texas” will be the catalyst this congregation needs to move from a place of sadness and grief to a new life filled with purpose. As we delve into the pericope chosen as the biblical foundation for this research project, we will see how the methodology that Jesus used in teaching the disciples after his crucifixion informs this project.

CHAPTER TWO

BIBLICAL FOUNDATIONS

Introduction

This introduction provides an outline of the subject of this chapter and why it was chosen as the biblical foundation for this doctoral research project. The second section provides an exhaustive analysis and exegesis of the selected pericope and how it impacts this research project. The final section provides a summary of the chapter and how these verses provide the biblical inspiration for this research project. The book of Acts provided an excellent biblical foundation for the problem at St. Paul United Methodist Church. While the first two chapters analyze the key themes of the establishment of the church, a critical analysis of the first eight verses of chapter one, provide an interpretation of the text and theme that informs and supports the hypothesis and problem statement of this doctoral research project by highlighting a methodology that can be utilized to accomplish this goal. This pericope provided insight into how Jesus prepared the disciples to move beyond their sorrow and grief and empowered them with the purpose for which they had been chosen which was to be His witnesses. The pericope in its entirety reads:

The first account I composed, Theophilus, about all that Jesus began to do and teach, until the day when He was taken up, after He had by the Holy Spirit given orders to the apostles whom He had chosen. To these He also presented Himself alive, after his suffering, by many convincing proofs, appearing to them over a period of forty days, and speaking of the things concerning the kingdom of God.

And gathering them together, He commanded them not to leave Jerusalem, but to wait for what the Father had promised, “Which,” He said, “you heard of from Me; for John baptized with water, but you shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now.” And so, when they had come together, they were asking Him, saying, “Lord, is it at this time You are restoring the kingdom to Israel?” He said to them, “It is not for you to know times or epochs which the Father has fixed by His own authority; but you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth.” (Acts 1:1-8 NASB)

These verses identify how Jesus chose to highlight and reinforce the lessons He had taught the disciples during the three years He had been with them. This methodology was the basis upon which this research project has been orchestrated. The simple structure of the first eight verses allows an appraisal of the scriptures which has been taught throughout the years, arranged into a cohesive story that provides a clear picture of Jesus and His purpose on earth, which is the basis for our evangelistic witness. It is to be noted that the consensus among most biblical scholars and theologians is that the book of Acts is a continuation of the Gospel of Luke and picks up where Luke chapter twenty-four ends. Therefore, an exegetical exploration and analysis of various key themes in the Book of Luke is necessary as an aide in clarifying Jesus’ message to the disciples as it supports and aligns with the research project.

The problem at St. Paul United Methodist Church was the lack of an evangelical witness due in part to the congregations’ lack of understanding that evangelism is the mission of the church. There is a great love for God and God’s people, but there is not a desire to take that love beyond the doors of the church to a world that is facing turmoil and loss of hope. An analysis of this pericope expounds on how it became the basis for this research project.

Exegetical Analysis of Acts 1:1-8

Literary Context: Authorship, Title, and Date

Loveday Alexander in the *Oxford Bible Commentary* states that the Book of Acts provides a narrative of the steps by which the Christian message made the transition from the rural, Palestinian world of Jesus to the largely urban world of Paul and the later epistles, based in the Greek cities of the Roman empire.¹ Acts chapter one, verse one is the optimum point at which this research project commences in that it provides the starting point of the disciples commissioning to be witnesses of Jesus Christ by Jesus Himself. The beginning of Acts recapitulates the end of Luke and tends to pick up where Luke chapter twenty-four ends, hence, it functions as the pivot between Luke's gospel and Acts.

Authorship

In researching this book, it was noted that the authorship of the Book of Acts was considered anonymous by many theologians: its opening verse (as was common in ancient literature) gives the name of its dedicatee, Theophilus, but not the name of the author. However, this dedication to Theophilus makes it easy to deduce that the author of Acts is the same as the author of Luke's gospel, and there is sufficient continuity of language, style, and theological interests to make this one of the few virtually unchallenged conclusions of New Testament scholarship. The other possible indicator of

¹ Loveday Alexander, John Barton, and John Muddiman, eds., *The Oxford Bible Commentary* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2013), 1028, ProQuest Ebook Central.

authorship within Acts is the so-called “we-passages” (Acts 15:36-18:28), which imply that the narrator was a companion of Paul on some of his voyages.²

Title

Darrell L. Bock in his commentary Acts (*Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament*) offers that traditionally, the title of the book had been “Acts of the Apostles,” but this ignores the role of God as the main player. The apostles are not noted in the title because many others beside the apostles are the human agents in the book. “The Way” is mentioned because this is Luke’s most prominent title for the new movement. The title underscores the divine support for the new community God has formed and is expanding. The name also explains that the community’s identity is rooted in divine provision and promise, as well as possessing a direction God points to on behalf of humanity.³ This certainly is a point of power in the fact that the apostles have been traditionally heralded as the primary change agents for the spread of the gospel, clearly there were so many others that were participants that it is easy to champion, while teaching these scriptures, that anyone can do just what the apostles did. Hence, there is no added distraction that one must have walked with Jesus to be a witness for Him. Our call to be Jesus’ witnesses is the message of evangelism.

Date

Alexander expresses that the question of date is no easier to resolve than the question of authorship, with which it is inextricably bound up. Because the book ends

² Alexander, Barton, and Muddiman, *Oxford Bible Commentary*, 1029.

³ Darrell L. Bock, “Acts,” *Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2007), 50, ProQuest Ebook Central.

with Paul in prison in Rome waiting for his appeal to Caesar to be heard, having been sent to Rome soon after the accession of Festus (Acts 25:1), who was procurator of Judea c.60-2 CE; and the puzzling failure to narrate the outcome of Paul's trial has been taken as evidence that the book itself was written during the two-year period of imprisonment in Rome (Acts 28:30), before the persecution under Nero (64 CE) in which Paul traditionally lost his life. The gospel preface implies that Luke sees himself as a second-generation Christian, one who has "followed" the tradition handed down by the original eyewitnesses' (Lk. 1:2). Thus, a date in the eighties would make sense.⁴

Craig Keener in his commentary *Between History and Spirit: The Apostolic Witness of the Book of Acts* comments that all scholars agree that Luke was not an eyewitness of the events reported in his first volume. Although a substantial minority of scholars continue to date Luke-Acts in the sixties, contending that Luke omits Paul's death because it had not yet occurred when he wrote, and a smaller number date the work, or part of it in the early second century, many scholars favor the final three decades of the first century, with most clustering in the mid-range of seventy-nine to ninety.⁵

Genre

Acts is a very different proposition, and even though it forms a narrative continuation to the Gospel of Luke which is effectively determined by its subject matter and sources: it is a gospel, modeled closely on Mark. Alexander stated it is widely

⁴ Alexander, Barton, and Muddiman, *Oxford Bible Commentary*, 1028.

⁵ Craig S. Keener, *Between History and Spirit: The Apostolic Witness of the Book of Acts* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2020), 3, ProQuest Ebook Central.

accepted that we may need to look further afield for literary models for Acts.⁶ Keener, on the other hand, states that many scholars argue persuasively that Luke writes a two-volume work that includes both biography and historiography. Treating the two books together thus invites a brief exploration of the character of ancient historiography, and of where Luke-Acts falls in the broader range of this genre.⁷

Purpose

Robert Wall's commentary on *The Acts of the Apostles: The New Interpreter's Bible* reflects that Luke's pastoral intent for writing this narrative may have been to characterize Christian discipleship in response to Theophilus's struggles. Many scholars believe that Theophilus may have been Luke's patron or dedicatee. Acts appears to have been written in response to a theological crisis – a confusion over or misappropriation of some core conviction of God's word that threatens to subvert the audience's Christian formation and witness.⁸ There is a similarity to today's culture whereby Christian witness appears to have been reformulated to man's interpretation based on individuals' desires. Acts, however, addresses the purpose for the church's primary evangelistic mission.

Themes

Three key themes of this pericope are: 1) Jesus is alive and functioning at God's right hand; 2) the promised Spirit will come and enable the new mission in fulfillment of

⁶ Alexander, Barton, and Muddiman, *Oxford Bible Commentary*, 1029.

⁷ Keener, *Between History and Spirit*, 4.

⁸ Robert W. Wall, "The Acts of the Apostles," *The New Interpreter's Bible*, Vol. 10, eds. Leander E. Keck, et. al. (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1994), 9-10.

divine promise; and 3) the message of the kingdom is to go out into all the world, starting from Jerusalem.⁹

Exegetical Analysis by Verse

Acts chapter one, verse one..., “the first account I composed Theophilus, about all Jesus began to do and teach...” The first step in teaching is to plan and organize the way the subject is to be taught. Undertaking the task of guiding the congregants of St. Paul United Methodist Church into the knowledge of Christian witness required a detailed plan. In the first verse of Acts chapter one, Luke reiterates that he has carefully investigated and compiled a written record of the actions that Jesus and the disciples had undertaken, by referring the reader back to the third gospel described as his former book. As in the gospel, Theophilus is addressed, but no other information about him is revealed. It may be conjectured that Theophilus, which means friend of God or lover of God, is merely a literary custom of the time and was used for the purposes for which Luke writes to address a Christian audience. Perhaps the person of Theophilus is representative of Christians today who love God and are loved by God, who have some knowledge of Jesus Christ and what He was purported to have done but are not firmly entrenched in the belief of all that has been written about Him. They attend church and “do” what is considered “Godly,” but are not fully committed to the gospel message and certainly not to the extent that they want to “bear” witness to Jesus Christ. This is most probably due to a lack of knowledge and or understanding of the gospel message.

⁹ Bock, “Acts,” 49.

Specifically, since the identity of Theophilus is uncertain, Acts appears to have been written in response to a theological crisis. Even if this was not the theological climate at the time of Luke's writing, it is certainly a reflection of the current theological events in the world today. The Book of Acts and this passage of scripture more specifically characterizes the identity of today's church with a focus on interpretive interests and cultural sensibilities rather than the basic biblical doctrine of the Christian church. Robert Wall writes in the *New Interpreter's Bible* that at the forefront of a faithful and intensive study of this biblical passage are the core convictions of Christian koinonia "community," inclusive of age, gender, and social class and highlights the universality of God's promise.¹⁰ The anticipated result of this research project was to enlighten the participants to the fact that our Christian witness is to the community and that the very act of evangelism is to enlarge that community.

Acts chapter one, verse two... "until the day when He was taken up, after He had by the Holy Spirit given orders to the apostles whom He had chosen." Jesus, being the *ho Logos* "the Word" (Jn. 1:1) knew that His last mission on earth, before ascending to the Father, was to solidify the knowledge of those with whom He had lived, served and taught for three years by communicating and reiterating the message of the kingdom of God, the reign of God and His, meaning Jesus' mission and, purpose, but more importantly who He was in relation to it. The intent of this project was to introduce Jesus in a manner differently from what the participants may have encountered in the past and thereby provide a cohesive message of Jesus that would enable the participants to understand the story as written. The participants, like the disciples, have experienced the

¹⁰ Wall, "The Acts of The Apostles," 9-10.

story of Jesus Christ, as having been taught in bits and pieces that could have possibly made it difficult to relate to and comprehend which could be a hindrance to the full understanding of what Jesus was attempting to accomplish. Luke in his writing, took the time to assemble the pieces into a coherent story. This project was designed to offer a similar compilation for the participants. This would endow the participants with the knowledge of the gospel message that solidified what they were to undertake as they evangelized.

Darrell Bock writes that the commandment alluded to here (*enteilamenos*) refers to the call to a mission that these chosen apostles should lead. This mission represents the next phase of God's work and takes place in fulfillment of scripture about Christ, as Luke 24:47 declares. So, the plan to take the message of the kingdom out to the world by preaching repentance and the forgiveness of sins takes place as part of the divine program. The term (*apostolos*) designates the authority which those called to this office possess. In normal usage, an apostle is merely a "commissioned, sent agent," and this is what these eleven were for Jesus. In Judaism, such a representative speaks for the one who sends him. "A man's agent is like to himself." They were to preach repentance for the forgiveness of sins to all the nations, beginning from Jerusalem, as witnesses empowered by the Spirit ("power from on high") sent from the Father (Lk. 24:47-49). Peter relates "And He ordered us to preach to the people, and solemnly testify that this is the One who has been appointed by God as Judge of the living and the dead." (Acts 10:42.) Just as Jesus chose the apostles by the Holy Spirit to be the first to undertake this mission, we were also chosen by the Holy Spirit to continue the mission.¹¹ The research

¹¹ Bock, "Acts," 53.

project design sought to change the perspective of what the participants may have believed by enabling them to see and embrace the fact that we are those chosen agents and are commissioned to continue this very mission that Jesus gave to the disciples and that is to evangelize as His witnesses.

Acts chapter one, verse three... “To these He also presented Himself alive, after His suffering, by many convincing proofs, appearing to them over a period of forty days, and speaking of things concerning the kingdom of God.” This is the first of the three key themes of this pericope: Jesus is alive and functioning at God’s right hand. This verse lets us know that this was not a brief encounter or fleeting event, but rather that Jesus spent considerable time with the apostles continually and continuously leading, guiding, instructing, and directing what they were to do. The first thing Jesus did was prove to the apostles that He was alive after the apostles had witnessed His suffering, crucifixion, death, and burial. These men had walked with Jesus for three years as He taught them, they were able to heal the sick, and work miracles, yet the truth of His message had not taken root within them. We fear that there are many within the church today, while professing to be believers of Jesus Christ, who doubt the resurrection primarily because they do not understand why Jesus came, why He had to go through what He did and what it meant for us. Without this understanding it will be an uphill battle to carry out the mission of evangelism. Subsequently, we believe it is imperative that we undertake to do as Jesus did, to substantiate, through the word of God that Jesus not only rose from the dead, but that He is alive even today. Wall states that the term Luke used for “many convincing proofs” (*tekmērion*) is found only here in the New Testament and used to

confirm his resurrection.¹² Jesus reiterated His teachings about the kingdom of God, which God had set up and given to Christ which is an everlasting kingdom (Dan. 2:44; 7:13).

This pericope is beneficial to this research project because Jesus, being the teacher here, provides the steps and guidance to move a people beyond a state of helplessness and hopelessness to a positive state of mind bound in the purpose of a mission that they can achieve and enables them to speak of their great love for God the Father and Jesus Christ the Son. These scriptures expose the correlation between the events of that time and today. There is an impediment that stands in the way of the congregants at St. Paul United Methodist Church's ability to share their belief in Jesus' resurrection and that can be found in what appears to be a loss of hope that is so prevalent today. The loss of hope is a strong, sometimes overwhelming emotion for people, regardless of whether their sadness stems from the loss of a loved one or from a terminal diagnosis they or someone they love has received. This can result in despair, discouragement, and depression. The loss of hope is prevalent in many of our traditional churches. For the members of St. Paul United Methodist Church leadership and congregational changes, especially during the pandemic, have resulted in a very different church than the one they were accustomed to. Zorodzai Dube identified this as Cultural Trauma in his article "Jesus' Death and Resurrection as Cultural Trauma." Dube states that the Cultural trauma theory is a perspective developed in sociology by a couple of American sociologists: Jeffrey C. Alexander and Ron Eyerman. The theory arose in reaction to the lay trauma theory from psychology, which defines trauma as a shocking

¹² Wall, "The Acts of the Apostles," 40.

event that shatters the physiological coping mechanism of the victim. In lay trauma theory, the focus is on the individual and trauma is construed as a shocking, sudden event that leaves the individual a helpless victim with no room to respond rationally. Cultural trauma differs by disputing the notion of connecting trauma to a particular event. Cultural trauma theorists believe that trauma does not exist from the event itself, but in the way the event has been represented. This describes what has been witnessed at St. Paul United Methodist Church because it is not one event that has influenced the congregation, but a series of events throughout the years. Trauma is something created or constructed by society and is characterized by a gradual realization by the community that its collective identity has been fundamentally shattered.¹³ This is not a new phenomenon, as Jesus also encountered the loss of hope that the apostles and His disciples were experiencing regarding His death on the cross. Jesus in His demonstrative teaching moved the disciples beyond the sense of loss and turned into a positive determination to continue Jesus' mission by sharing their experiences with Him and His purpose on the earth. The goal of this doctoral project was to do the same with the participants of this project and lead them to use that pain to promote their experiences with Jesus as they evangelized.

Keener states that Luke, wishing to stress the objective certainty of the resurrection, had reason to underline the time Jesus spent with His disciples; this time reinforced the certainty of their testimony that He was again alive. Similarly, Luke's emphasis on the bodily character of the resurrection (Lk. 24:39-43) suggests the importance of a clear point of demarcation for the ascension, distinguishing Jesus'

¹³ Zorodzai Dube, "Jesus' Death and Resurrection as Cultural Trauma," *Neotestamentica* 47, no. 1 (2013): 109-110, <https://jstor.org/stable/43048898>.

resurrection appearances from the mere nonbodily apparitions of Greek belief. The forty days serve a narrative function in filling much of the period between Jesus' resurrection and Pentecost (fifty days Acts 2:1).¹⁴

While the gospels appear to show that Jesus' resurrection occurred in one very long day, Acts provided a more detailed account of His resurrection as occurring for an extended period of "forty days" (Acts 1:3). Some interpreters think Luke's reference to forty days is a rhetorical marker that extends Jesus "one very long day" denoted in the gospels into an extended period, perhaps to emphasize his resurrection. Still others think Luke added the forty days to fill out the chronology from Easter to Ascension and then to Pentecost some ten days later. Various Old Testament writings, which Luke knew, refer to forty days/years as a period of preparation during which God fully instructs people for the future work. In Luke's gospel, the Spirit leads Jesus into the wilderness for forty days of testing (Lk. 4:1-13). The reference to forty days then, probably symbolizes an extended period of preparation and examination for the difficult work ahead.¹⁵ The forty days offer a perfect timeframe in which to teach the basics of the gospel message of salvation through Jesus Christ which is the foundation of an evangelistic ministry. Utilizing the time frame of eight weeks for the research project provided a sufficient period to knit together the bits and pieces of knowledge that the participants possess into a better understanding of the gospel message of Jesus Christ. These appearances showed that Jesus was still alive. To have seen Jesus in the resurrection was a qualification for being a "witness" of Jesus (Lk. 24:44-48). Bock states that the idea is not that Jesus was

¹⁴ Keener, *Acts: An Exegetical Commentary*, 668.

¹⁵ Wall, "The Acts of the Apostles," 40-41.

continuously with them for forty days but that he appeared at intervals within that period as the gospels indicate.¹⁶

It is only in Mark's gospel that any attention is given to the disciples' state of sorrow and hopelessness at the death of Jesus. While the scriptures do not provide a great deal of information about this, we must believe that all of Jesus' followers were also experiencing the same hopelessness at such a great loss of Jesus and the anticipated arrival of the coming kingdom of God that He had taught for three long years. When loss comes, sorrow is not far behind. Humanity tends to be uncomfortable with mourning loss and attempts to avoid the reality that death (of people and things) is a real and unavoidable part of life. Instead, the tendency is to appear strong, think positively and fill our lives with whatever will help mask the pain. Sometimes, instead of allowing sorrow and loss to drive sufferers to greater hope, many avoid facing brokenness head on by filling the deep ache with whatever will dull the pain. For an older, traditional church it is holding on to "what we have always done," or "the good old days" instead of having a vision that is future oriented. It is reminiscing of the wonderful times of old and the way they had church then along with not understanding why the younger generation does not share in their remembrance of those times. Add to it the pandemic in 2020 that resulted in the doors of the church being shut. More prevalent is the fact that the church has changed drastically and now the focus is on maintaining virtual services online to retain the online congregation gathered during the pandemic along with changes to the way services are being done. Unfortunately, there will not be a "going back to the way it was."

¹⁶ Bock, *Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament*, 55.

Luke chapter twenty-four, one of the more well-known resurrection stories and one of the convincing proofs, describes two disciples walking on the road to Emmaus discussing all the events that had occurred concerning Jesus. It provides a look at the lesser-known disciples other than the eleven apostles and how Jesus' suffering affected them. They were sad and sorrowful as they had believed Jesus to be a prophet who had come to redeem Israel from the control of man, so that they could be free to worship God. There was a loss of hope and a great disappointment that the one who spoke of changing their lives could be dead at the hands of the Romans. These disciples perceived that Jesus was just a religious man who knew the scriptures, but since He could not save Himself, He could not possibly have been the Messiah. They are joined by Jesus, whom they did not recognize, and he asked them what they were discussing. They were stunned that there was anyone in the area who was unaware of what had occurred, and they began to relate the recent turn of events to this "stranger." Jesus was surprised by their lack of faith and incomprehension of why those events had to occur even though He had spent three years expounding upon the message of the kingdom of God and His role. At this point Jesus began to express the scriptures that proclaimed the message He had been sharing during His time with them so that they may understand who He was and the kingdom of God.

Diane Chen states that if the thought of a suffering Messiah is too much of a contradiction in terms, then the idea of a dead Messiah is even more unfathomable. How can God's Messiah be shamed and killed on a Roman cross when he is expected to deliver Israel from the pagans?¹⁷ Perceptions, assumptions, and innuendo are some of the

¹⁷ Diane G. Chen, *Luke: A New Covenant Commentary* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2017), 308.

greatest hindrances to the ministry of the church. This can be such a tremendous barrier to the newest converts and literally stop a church from growing as the congregants do not take the time to study and learn the word of God, which leads to misinformation, and confusion. Many refuse to attend Bible Study and/or Sunday School but are quick to offer their opinion of what is going on at the church. Or better yet, the ones with the least knowledge speak the loudest. The aim of this research project was to arm the participants with knowledge that will empower them to stand firm on what the word of God says and enable them to be confident in their evangelistic witness. The goal was that in the time allotted for this project the habits of prayer and study of the scriptures would become second nature and continue once the project was completed.

Acts chapter one, verse four... “And gathering them together, He commanded them not to leave Jerusalem, but to wait for what the Father had promised, ‘Which’ He said, ‘you heard of from Me.....’” While sharing a meal with the apostles during one of His post-resurrection appearances, Jesus told the apostles to stay in Jerusalem until they received the promise from God the Father which He had told them about. It was in this moment of the breaking of bread, during this close and intimate gathering that Jesus effectively gave the apostles’ orders, as a commander would give to his troops to preach the gospel and testify of who He was by authority of God the Father. Jerusalem for the disciples was the city of prophecy. The fate of all creation happened there. Everything flowed out from Jerusalem. This research project was designed to reiterate that St. Paul United Methodist Church is the Jerusalem for the church and its community today. It is ground zero for the evangelistic ministry and the source for strength, guidance, rejuvenation and even regeneration as the participants effectively go out to minister. At

the core, Jesus explained lovingly to the disciples that they will not be required to accomplish this under their own power, He told them: “And I will ask the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may be with you forever...” (Jn. 14:16) Jesus encouraged the disciples by telling them that they are never alone and the Holy Spirit will aid them in remembering His teachings. One of the primary reasons given by those who refuse to be a part of an evangelistic ministry is their discomfort in talking to other people because they are not as knowledgeable as the pastor about the scriptures. Primarily this research project’s goal was to simplify the message being taught because the participants would be sharing the gospel message based upon their experiences with the Lord so that it could easily be remembered and built upon with continued study of the scriptures. The lessons emphasized that it is the Holy Spirit that leads and guides us in our evangelistic witness by bringing back to our remembrance the teachings of Jesus. Jesus, therefore, stressed it was imperative that they wait for that promise to materialize so that they would be fully prepared to begin and continue the mission He was giving them to do. “But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all that I said to you.” (Jn. 14:26) Bock states that effective ministry requires God’s direction and enablement. The missional command to evangelize provides the direction for the church, and the Spirit gives the enablement.¹⁸ This point is why prayer is being stressed as a vital part of evangelistic ministry and as a part of this research project. Man is so limited in how he acts and thinks, he cannot begin to comprehend the things of the Father, the witness of the Holy Spirit nor the mind of Christ. It is so necessary to make prayer a consistent part of our daily lives to direct, lead

¹⁸ Bock, “Acts,” 56-57.

and guide us into the purpose that is ordained for our lives and to continue the mission of the church. Dr. Tolly A. Kennon, III emphasizes in his book, *The Jesus Model of Leadership: Volume One: Prayer's Essential Connection to Effective Spiritual Leadership*, "One of the things that prayer does for leaders is that it reveals whether what we want to do is what God actually intends for us to do. We must remember that just because we want (or do not want) to do something doesn't mean that that is what our Heavenly Father wants or even intends for us to do... It is through prayer with Him that the Lord corrects our understanding about what His intentions for us are."¹⁹

Acts chapter one, verse five... "for John baptized with water, but you shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now." This verse continues the point Jesus' was making from the previous verse and is the second theme of this pericope: the promised Spirit will come and enable the new mission in fulfillment of divine promise. Clearly there is a distinction between water baptism and baptism of the Holy Spirit. Jesus recalled and explained to the disciples that John the Baptist baptized with water, which was done after repentance as a preparatory washing for new life and the Holy Spirit. Participation in it meant that one was ready for God to come. The gospels state that the baptism of the Holy Spirit would come but did not offer a time for when this would occur. Keener relates that Jesus was teaching the disciples both about the Spirit (Acts 1:4-5) and about the kingdom (Acts 1:3), and the disciples would have every reason to understand these two themes as inseparably linked.²⁰ Keener explains that what the disciples had not fully understood in Jesus' kingdom teaching earlier (Matt. 10:5),

¹⁹ Tolly A. Kennon, III, *The Jesus Model of Leadership: Volume One: Prayer's Essential Connection to Effective Spiritual Leadership* (Winston-Salem, NC: Smack, 2023), 65.

²⁰ Keener, *Acts: An Exegetical Commentary*, 682.

however, was that Jesus would go and then return (Lk. 19:12) equipping them with the Spirit in the meantime to carry out the mission (Acts 1:8-11).²¹ The primary emphasis of this research project was to teach that the mission of the church is to embark upon the same mission that Jesus had bestowed upon the disciples. This was a point that was to be stressed in the training. One could not be expected to remember every word read in the Bible and utilize it to speak coherently to the gospel message. But with the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, they would be provided with a “spirit” guide to aid them as they went about the mission of evangelism.

Acts chapter one, verse six... “And so, when they had come together, they were asking Him, saying, ‘Lord, is it at this time you are restoring the kingdom to Israel?’” By spending the forty days with Jesus, the disciples had gained a deeper understanding of Jesus’ purpose during His earthly ministry which led them to ask Him whether He was now going to restore the kingdom to Israel. The disciples were clearly listening to Jesus’ teachings because they had the misguided expectation that He was going to restore Israel when He was crucified. Apparently, they felt that since He had been resurrected, He would still do it. This verse provides the opportunity to expound upon the fact that we can never be distracted by the things we believe are to occur or should occur in our minds and hearts. We have a mission to carry out and that must be the premier thought and action of the church. Unfortunately, the church tends to become caught up in the little things that can so easily distract us from the mission of evangelism. We are to “...be steadfast, immovable always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your toil is not in vain in the Lord.” (1 Cor. 15:58).

²¹ Keener, *Acts: An Exegetical Commentary*, 687.

Acts chapter one, verse seven... “He said to them, ‘It is not for you to know times or epochs which the Father has fixed by His own authority;’” Ecclesiastes 3:1 reads, “There is an appointed time for everything. And there is a time for every event under heaven.” As much as we would love for God to step in immediately and rectify the wrongs in this world, God has an appointed time. Jesus took the time to redirect the apostles’ attention back to the purpose for which He had commanded them at that moment. We are living in the times when current events in the world certainly highlight the events recorded in the Bible. Many are saying we are living in the last days. However, just as Jesus told the disciples, no one knows the plans of the Father and this doctoral research project stressed that the mission of evangelism and the overall purpose of the church is to be carried out until Jesus returns. We are not to be concerned with the time.

Keener specifies that Jesus does not deny that Israel’s restoration will come. Rather, He merely warns the disciples that it is not their place to know times, instead, they must focus on their mission.²² Thankfully, the Father knows mankind very well for if we knew when things were to occur or when the opportunity might arise, we would do only what was necessary up to that point. We are to undertake and complete the mission of evangelism by keeping our eyes focused on satisfactorily pleasing God. The focus at St. Paul United Methodist Church has been taken away from the mission of the church and that is to make disciples. To make disciples we must first undertake the evangelistic mission of spreading the good news of the gospel. This research project is to direct the participants focus back to the purpose at hand and that is to make disciples through evangelism.

²² Keener, *Acts: An Exegetical Commentary*, 687.

Acts chapter one, verse eight... “but you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth.” This is the third key theme of this pericope: the message of the kingdom is to go out into all the world, starting from Jerusalem. The Holy Spirit that Jesus told the disciples about would come with the power of God inherent in the Son, Jesus Christ that would enable the disciples with powers and the ability to perform miracles. “But when He, the Spirit of truth, comes, He will guide you into all the truth; for He will not speak on His own initiative, but whatever He hears, He will speak; and He will disclose to you what is to come” (Jn. 16:13). The Holy Spirit will not only allow for Jesus’ disciples to perform miracles and wonders, but they will be endowed with the ability to hear from heaven those things that the Father wishes them to know and act upon. Richly endowed with this blessing of the Holy Spirit, the disciples of Jesus Christ now had the ability to be the greatest witnesses of Jesus sovereignty on the earth. The best part about this was that while Jesus had spoken this to the disciples He had been with during His earthly ministry, He also informed them that the Holy Spirit would continue to be a guide for all His disciples down through the ages. Hence, new disciples could be witnesses of Jesus and the things that He did because they were also granted the wisdom, authority, and power that Jesus possessed through the Holy Spirit. This is one of the reasons that prayer was such a vital component of this research project. It is through prayer that one can hear from the Holy Spirit and be guided into what needs to be said and done as we evangelize.

Joseph Fitzmyer states that by the instructions that Christ here gives to His apostles and followers, He commissions them to bear witness to Him unto the end of the

earth. They are not to ask about “time” or persons, because their commission is to last through all times, until He “will come back in the same way you saw Him go” (Acts 1:11).²³ There will be a day when Jesus returns from heaven to complete what God has started through Him. Jesus’ resurrection and the coming of the Spirit assure us that God is at work and the plan of salvation is intact. It is a central goal of the Spirit operating in the church that God’s community be committed to the mission of evangelism. Since the time of the apostles, other believers are also beneficiaries of Jesus’ choice, His revelation of Himself, His commission, and His provision of the Spirit, but the roots of our experience go back to Jesus’ resurrection appearance to these disciples, who are different from us in that they saw him face to face.²⁴

Conclusion

Jesus took considerable time teaching the disciples about the kingdom of God and His purpose on the earth which are the essential elements of evangelism. The pericope for the biblical foundations chapter contains the introduction and last words of Jesus to the disciples after His resurrection and prior to His ascension. Jesus’ methodology was simple as He taught and expounded upon the words contained in the Bible which speak of the Father and the kingdom of God which He came to proclaim, His role in the story and what was to come. Jesus taught the disciples to tell of the things they had learned, heard and seen Him do. There is no difference today, we are to recount our experience with Jesus as we evangelize our community and the nation.

²³ Joseph A. Fitzmyer, “The Acts of the Apostles: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary,” *The Anchor Bible*, vol. 31 (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2007), 201-202.

²⁴ Bock, “Acts,” 58-59.

Paramount within this pericope was the need to ascertain whether the disciples really believed that Jesus Christ had risen from the dead. Without belief in the risen Savior, there can be no witness to lead others to salvation. After His resurrection He spent a period of forty days reiterating His teachings as He prepared the disciples to carry on the mission He had started. He made sure the disciples understood that this mission was to be accomplished with the help of the Holy Spirit. By addressing these elements, the participants ascertained a clearer vision of their origins and what they are to do to carry out the mission of the church through evangelism.

After having spent three years with the disciples the disciples were no closer to understanding what Jesus had been teaching them than they were the first day they chose to follow him. The disciples had allowed the circumstances that had taken place to cause them to doubt Jesus, despite everything that they knew about Him and had seen of Him. The congregation at St. Paul United Methodist Church have been followers of Jesus for a long time, some have a great deal of knowledge about Jesus and the word of God, but do not possess a clear understanding of what it means to be a disciple and even less understanding of the mission of the church. The similarities of the scenarios are undisputed.

Jesus then reiterated all that He had taught from the beginning concerning the kingdom and His place in the Bible from the Old Testament to the time He ascended back to the Father. For this research project to be a comprehensive study of the gospel message, it was imperative that there was a focus on the Old Testament scriptures as well as the New Testament scriptures and how these scriptures apprise and sustain the gospel message. Jesus then encouraged the disciples by telling them to wait for the promise that

the Father had given to them which was for the Holy Spirit to come and dwell with them. The Holy Spirit would let them know that they were not alone in this journey, the Holy Spirit would be the witness concerning the things of Christ by bringing back to their remembrance whatever was necessary to make their witness sound.

The Doctor of Ministry research project, “Developing a Training Model for Evangelism at St. Paul United Methodist Church, Dallas, Texas” contains this same encouragement enabling the participants to know that this undertaking (to be witnesses of Jesus Christ) does not rely on nor is it dependent upon their power, but upon the power of the Holy Spirit. It is through prayer that we connect with the Holy Spirit and the Holy Spirit leads and guides us. Knowing that they are working in the strength and power of the Holy Spirit enables the participants to know that there is nothing impossible for them to accomplish including being a witness of Jesus Christ to others. Every born-again believer in Jesus Christ has been commissioned to go and make disciples (Matt. 28:18-20). We have been empowered to carry out this mission by the authority of Jesus Christ through the Holy Spirit. Junius B. Dotson in his book, *Soul Reset* writes “When we begin to really understand what a disciple is—a person who knows Christ, who is growing in Christ, who is serving Christ and sharing Christ—we discover that discipleship is a lifelong journey that requires a steady connectedness to Jesus.”²⁵ This next chapter will focus on the distinctiveness of John Wesley and how his life and ministry journey became the foundation for the Methodist denomination, whose dogma is to create

²⁵ Junius B. Dotson, *Soul Reset: Breakdown, Breakthrough, and the Journey to Wholeness* (Nashville, TN: Upper Room Books, 2019), 29.

disciples for Christ through outreach, evangelism, and seeking holiness by the power of the Holy Spirit.

CHAPTER THREE

HISTORICAL FOUNDATIONS

Introduction

In this chapter we will peruse the life and legacy of John Wesley, theologian, evangelist, and leader of the evangelical revival movement within the Church of England known as Methodism. This introduction outlines the subject of this chapter and why he was chosen as the historical figure for this doctoral research project. The second section serves as the historical review of John Wesley's life which sustains this research project. The final section is a summary of the chapter and describes how John Wesley's mission and purpose in life was to glorify God and not himself. The one attribute that never changed was Wesley's prayer life. Wesley's conversion led him to the understanding that the mission of the church was and is to make disciples. The profoundness of this certitude undergirds this Doctor of Ministry project. This historical perspective of John Wesley's methodical and enthusiastic zeal serves as the foundation of the Doctor of Ministry theme "Developing a Training Model for Evangelism at St. Paul United Methodist Church, Dallas, Texas."

The Preamble for Social Principles in *The Book of Discipline of the United Methodist Church* reads in part:

Grateful for God's forgiving love, in which we live and by which we are judged and affirming our belief in the inestimable worth of each individual, we renew our

commitment to become faithful witnesses to the gospel, not alone to the ends of earth, but also to the depths of our common life and work.¹

This preamble expounds the philosophy of evangelistic witness upon which the United Methodist Church was founded. The United Methodist Church's dogma is to create disciples for Christ through outreach, evangelism, and seeking holiness by the power of the Holy Spirit.

While both John Wesley and his brother Charles are credited with the creation of the United Methodist Church, history has placed the greater emphasis upon John Wesley as the actual creator of the teachings that led to the formation of the Methodist denomination. Undoubtedly, John Wesley did not just wake up one day and state that he was going to create a new Christian denomination. Even more importantly, we can be certain that his life and ministry were not orchestrated to that end. Instead, it is through his determination, to be the best Christian example of Jesus Christ on the earth and to live as holy as possible, that led to what is now the United Methodist Church. We will consider Wesley's writings and those of his contemporaries by studying John Wesley's life. We will examine the ebbs and flows of his life and ministry to determine the factors from his life that are inherent in the United Methodist Church's theology and pedagogy. We will endeavor to retain the chronological timetable of events, however, some events, as it pertains to his childhood, may be out of chronological order, as noted in his journal. Nevertheless, there should be a consistent review of his life and ministry. The accounting of John Wesley's life is varied and extensive, so we will be endeavoring to review the times and events that provide the greatest insight into who he was and his thought

¹ United Methodist Church, *The Book of Discipline: Part V Social Principles* (Nashville, TN: The United Methodist Publishing House, 2016), 106.

processes. We will ascertain who and what outside influences had the greatest effect upon his life and ministry as it pertains to his evangelistic witness.

Family Religious Influence

Invariably, many great men and women can recite some event in their lives that was the defining moment for either who they are or what they do. John Wesley certainly attested to that fact. On February 9, 1709, the roof of the rectory caught fire and John's mother, and father were able to get all the children out except John, who was five years old at the time, because he was on the second floor of the building. One of the parishioners stood on the shoulders of another man and lifted John out through the window, thereby saving his life.² Later in his life, John used the phrase, "a brand plucked out of the fire," quoting Zechariah 3:2 to describe the incident.³ It is clear why Wesley chose this particular passage of scripture to describe his deliverance from the fire, but one must ponder his use of the analogy of a firebrand which describes a person who is passionate about a particular cause, typically inciting change and taking radical action. This certainly describes John Wesley's approach to evangelism, as we will see.

John Wesley was born on June 17, 1703, the fifteenth child and second surviving son of Samuel Wesley (Rector of Epworth, Lincolnshire) and Susanna (nee Annesley). His childhood was one of studious discipline and methodical daily routine. It appears his mother's influence was instrumental in his organized and meticulous lifestyle. Yet it was

² *New World Encyclopedia*, s.v. "John Wesley," https://www.newworldencyclopedia.org/p/index.php?title=John_Wesley&oldid=1075251.

³ Percy Livingstone Parker, *The Journal of John Wesley* (Chicago, IL: Moody Publishers, 1951), 15.

this foible that became the foundational basis for the Methodist movement. Beginning at age five, the Wesley children were home-schooled and were expected to become proficient in Latin and Greek and learn major portions of the New Testament by heart. His mother, Susanna examined each child before the midday meal and before evening prayers. They were not allowed to eat between meals and were interviewed singly by their mother one evening each week for the purpose of intensive spiritual instruction.⁴ One can ascertain that this regimented training was deeply ingrained within John Wesley and became a foundation for his evangelistic witness.

Religious Educational Influence

Wesley's formal education began in 1714 when, at age ten and a half, he was sent to Charterhouse School in London. By all accounts, he was a well-prepared student. In 1720, at the age of sixteen, he matriculated at Christ Church, Oxford where, except for a two-year hiatus when he assisted his father, he remained for the next sixteen years. In 1724, Wesley graduated with a Bachelor of Arts degree and decided to pursue a Master of Arts degree.⁵ After a good deal of heart-searching and theological talk with his mother, Wesley was ordained a deacon by the excellent Potter, afterward Primate, but then Bishop of Oxford⁶ on September 25, 1725, holy orders being a necessary step toward becoming a fellow and tutor at the university.⁷

⁴ John Wesley and Elisabeth Jay, *The Journal of John Wesley: A Selection* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1987), vii.

⁵ New World Encyclopedia, s.v. "John Wesley."

⁶ Parker, *The Journal of John Wesley*, 15.

⁷ New World Encyclopedia, s.v. "John Wesley."

It was at this point that Wesley's scholarly ambitions collided with the first stirrings of his awakening religious consciousness. His mother, on learning of his intention to be ordained, suggested that he "enter upon a serious examination of yourself, that you may know whether you have a reasonable hope of salvation." Wesley subsequently began keeping a daily diary, a practice which he continued for the rest of his life. His early entries included rules and resolutions, his scheme of study, lists of sins and shortcomings, and "general questions" as to his piety, all to the end of promoting "holy living." He also began a lifelong obsession with the ordering of time, arising at four in the morning, setting time aside for devotion, and eliminating "all useless employments and knowledge." As Wesley put it in a letter to his older brother, "Leisure and I have taken leave of one another."⁸ While it is not expected that everyone can or will follow such a regimented lifestyle, one must be devoted to prayer and study of the scriptures to adequately attain the fundamental knowledge of the gospel message to understand how their lives and experiences can be utilized as a source for them to share their faith with others through evangelism. Each participant in this doctoral research project is asked to spend time each day in prayer and study of the scriptures.

In March 1726, Wesley was unanimously elected a fellow of Lincoln College, Oxford. This carried with it the right to a room at the college and a regular salary. This delighted his father, and he said, "Whatever I am, my Jack is Fellow of Lincoln."⁹ While continuing his studies, Wesley taught Greek, lectured on the New Testament, and moderated daily disputations at the university. However, a call to the ministry intruded

⁸ Parker, *The Journal of John Wesley*, 15.

⁹ New World Encyclopedia, s.v. "John Wesley."

upon his academic career. In August 1727, after obtaining his master's degree, he returned to Epworth. His father had requested his assistance in serving the neighboring cure of Wroot. Ordained a priest on September 22, 1728, Wesley served as a parish curate for two years. He returned to Oxford in November 1729 at the request of the Rector of Lincoln College to maintain his status as junior Fellow.¹⁰

In the year of his ordination, he read Jeremy Taylor's *Holy Living and Dying* and the *Imitatio Christi*, and William Law's *Serious Call* and *Christian Perfection*, he said they gave him a more sublime view of the law of God; and he resolved to keep it, inwardly and outwardly, as sacredly as possible, believing that in obedience he would find salvation.¹¹ In essence, John Wesley evangelized himself, as he undertook to know and understand the gospel message and sought to become more like Jesus Christ. Taylor's book contained "The Rule and Exercises of Holy Living" which included such things as the care of our time, purity of intention, and prayers and devotions according to the religion and purposes of the foregoing consideration.¹² The *Imitatio Christi* translates into a book about imitating Jesus Christ in life. The two books from William Law were about the nature and extent of Christian devotion, the nature and design of Christianity, that its sole end is to deliver us from the misery and disorder of this present state and raise us to a blissful enjoyment of the divine nature. One can certainly see the impact these books had upon Wesley's life. This is the ultimate goal of evangelism, as we

¹⁰ New World Encyclopedia, s.v. "John Wesley."

¹¹ Parker, *The Journal of John Wesley*, 15.

¹² Jeremy Taylor, *Holy Living and Dying: with Prayers containing The Complete Duty of a Christian* (Philadelphia, PA: Thomas Wardle, 1842), B.

endeavor to aid others by sharing how we enjoy the divine nature of the kingdom through our relationship with Jesus Christ.

One of Wesley's contemporaries, Augustine Birrell, King's Counsel in his "An Appreciation of John Wesley's Journal" wrote of John Wesley:

In his early manhood, he met "a serious man" who said to him, "Sir, you wish to serve God and go to heaven. Remember you cannot serve him alone. You must therefore find companions or make them. The Bible knows nothing of solitary religion." He was very confident, this serious man, and Wesley never forgot his message, "You must find companions or make them. The Bible knows nothing of solitary religion." These words forever sounded in Wesley's ears, determining his theology, which rejected the stern individualism of Calvin, and fashioning his whole polity, his famous class meetings, and general gregarious methods. Therefore, to him it was given many to save with himself.¹³

He pursued a rigidly methodical and abstemious life, studied Scripture, and performed his religious duties diligently, depriving himself so that he would have alms to give. He began to seek after holiness of heart and life.¹⁴ That advice given to Wesley speaks clearly of an evangelistic lifestyle and Wesley went to extremes to carry out that mission. Unfortunately, similar to Wesley's time and the teachings of Calvinism, the current social and political culture in this country tends to lean toward exclusion of some people instead of encompassing all of God's people. This can be a great hindrance to evangelism as some will choose to argue the points of scripture rather than listen to the sound doctrine of the scriptures. This has been a reason many have shied away from evangelism in the past. It will be emphasized that there is no need to argue with anyone, if that person will not receive the message, then they should move on.

¹³ Parker, *The Journal of John Wesley*, 15.

¹⁴ Parker, *The Journal of John Wesley*, 15.

Upon his return to Oxford, John joined his brother Charles and two other students in a religious study group for study and the pursuit of a devout Christian life per the Anglican pietistic tradition (e.g., frequent attendance at Holy Communion). John became the group leader, the group increased somewhat in number and greatly in commitment. It is at this point that Wesley's leadership abilities were manifested. Wesley set rules for self-examination. This signified the start of Wesley's evangelistic ministry. The group was designated by several names: "the Sacramentarians," the "Godly," or "Holy Club," or "the Methodists."¹⁵ The group met daily from six until nine for prayer, psalms, and reading of the Greek New Testament. They prayed every waking hour for several minutes each day for a special virtue. Whereas the church's prescribed attendance was only three times a year, they took communion every Sunday. They fasted on Wednesdays and Fridays until three o'clock as was commonly observed in the ancient church. In 1730, the group began the practice of visiting prisoners in jail. They preached, educated, relieved jailed debtors whenever possible, and cared for the sick.¹⁶ The Methodists also extended their activities to workhouses and poor people, distributing food; in 1735, the group disintegrated.¹⁷

Given the low ebb of spirituality in Oxford at that time, it was not surprising that Wesley's group provoked a negative reaction. They were considered to be religious "enthusiasts," which in the context of the time meant religious fanatics. University sarcasm styled them the "Holy Club," a title of derision. Currents of opposition became a

¹⁵ Wesley and Jay, *The Journal of John Wesley*, vii.

¹⁶ New World Encyclopedia, s.v. "John Wesley."

¹⁷ Britannica Encyclopedia, s.v. "John Wesley."

furor following the mental breakdown and death of a group member, William Morgan. In response to the charge that “rigorous fasting” had hastened his death, Wesley noted that Morgan had left off fasting a year and a half since. In the same letter, which was widely circulated, Wesley referred to the name “Methodist” which “some of our neighbors are pleased to compliment us.” That name was used by an anonymous author in a published pamphlet (1733) describing Wesley and his group, “The Oxford Methodists.”¹⁸

Wesley also regarded the contempt with which he and his group were held to be a mark of a true Christian. As he put it in a letter to his father, “Till he be thus contemned, no man is in a state of salvation.”¹⁹ Nevertheless, Wesley was reaching a point of transition. It was at this point we saw the firebrand manifested in Wesley as he stood his ground on his beliefs and determination to live a holy life. Wesley demonstrated how it was necessary to develop a “thick skin” because other people will condemn your Christian Walk and use bullying to deter one’s Christian journey. This was a great point to stress during the evangelism training that not everyone will receive their “witness”, and they must be okay with that.

In October 1734, his aged father asked that he take over Epworth parish. Wesley declined, stating that he “must stay in Oxford.” Only there, he said, could one “obtain the right company, conditions, and ability to pursue a holy discipline – not in bucolic, barbarous Epworth.” Ironically, within a few months of turning down Epworth, Wesley, and his brother Charles set sail for the more bucolic and barbarous colony of Georgia.²⁰

¹⁸ New World Encyclopedia, s.v. “John Wesley.”

¹⁹New World Encyclopedia, s.v. “John Wesley.”

²⁰ New World Encyclopedia, s.v. “John Wesley.”

James Oglethorpe founded the colony of Georgia along the American southern seaboard in 1733 as a haven for imprisoned debtors, needy families, and persecuted European Protestants. A renowned soldier and Member of Parliament, Oglethorpe led a commission which exposed the horrors of debtor prisons and resulted in the release of more than ten thousand prisoners. However, this created the problem of how to cope with so many homeless, penniless persons let loose in English society. Oglethorpe proposed to solve this by setting up the colony of Georgia as a bulwark against Spanish expansion from the South. He obtained funds, gained a charter, and won the support of the native Creek and Cherokee tribes, several representatives of which accompanied him back to England to great acclaim.²¹

Following his father's death in April 1735, John was persuaded by an Oxford friend, John Burton and Colonel James Oglethorpe, governor of the colony of Georgia in North America, to oversee the spiritual lives of the colonists and to missionize the Native Americans as an agent for the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel.²² Wesley saw the representative tribesmen in Oxford and resolved to missionize the American Indians. Undoubtedly, disillusionment with Oxford played a part in this decision, and in a letter to one of the colony's promoters, Wesley likened his role to that of Paul, turning from the "Jews" to the "Gentiles." Nevertheless, Wesley's "chief motive" for becoming a missionary was "the hope of saving my own soul." He hoped "to learn the true sense of the gospel of Christ by preaching it to the heathen." It is as we endeavor to spread the gospel through our evangelistic witness that we learn and grow as disciples of Jesus

²¹ New World Encyclopedia, s.v. "John Wesley."

²² Britannica Encyclopedia, s.v. "John Wesley."

Christ. Although he persuaded his brother Charles and two other members of the Holy Club to accompany him, Wesley had only limited opportunities to missionize tribal peoples. Instead, he became the designated minister of the colony.²³ Wesley's desire and dogged determination to learn the true sense of the gospel of Christ imbued this doctoral research project in that it supported the fact that one must first be a disciple to make disciples.

During his passage to America, Wesley and company continued their Holy Club practices: private prayers at 4:00 a.m., frequent services, readings and exhortations which were resented by passengers. Twenty-six Moravians, refugees from central Europe, were also on board. Wesley was impressed by the "great seriousness of their behavior, by the "servile offices" they performed for other passengers, and by their fearlessness. Wesley reported that amid a psalm, with which they began their service, "the sea broke over, split the mainsail in pieces, covered the ship, and poured in between the decks..." According to Wesley, "A terrible screaming began among the English," while "the Germans calmly sung on." Wesley subsequently went among their "crying, trembling neighbors," pointing out "the difference in the hour of trial, between him that feareth God, and him that feareth Him not." However, Wesley later came under the scrutiny of the Moravian pastor, Augustus Spangenberg, who questioned whether he had the "witness" of the Spirit "within himself." Seeing that Wesley was surprised and "knew not what to answer," Spangenberg countered, "True...but do you know He has saved you?" Wesley answered, "I hope He has died to save me." Spangenberg pushed further, "Do you know yourself?"

²³ New World Encyclopedia, s.v. "John Wesley."

Wesley said, “I do” but confessed in his diary, “I fear they were vain words.”²⁴ Wesley’s response both publicly and privately calls attention to where many “Christians” find themselves - in a state of uncertainty in their spiritual walk. Each aspect of this research project is designed to help the participants to examine themselves as they study the scriptures and pray for understanding as they prepare to evangelize.

This experience led Wesley to believe that the Moravians possessed an inner strength which he lacked. The deeply personal religion that the Moravian pietists practiced heavily influenced Wesley and is reflected in his theology of Methodism.²⁵ The mission to the indigenous peoples proved abortive, nor did Wesley succeed with most of his flock. He served them faithfully, but his stiff high churchmanship antagonized them. He approached the Georgia mission as a “High churchman,” seeing it as an opportunity to revive “primitive Christianity” in a primitive environment.²⁶ What must be inherent in our evangelistic witness is the fact that no one is greater or stands above anyone else. We are on this journey together and so a witness of love and compassion is necessary for evangelism. We cannot be so focused on the task at hand that we become brutish in our methodology. Although Wesley’s primary goal was to evangelize the Native American people, a shortage of clergy in the colony largely limited his ministry to European settlers in Savannah. While his ministry has often been judged to have been a failure compared to his later success as a leader in the Evangelical Revival, Wesley gathered around him a

²⁴ New World Encyclopedia, s.v. “John Wesley.”

²⁵ Kathy W. Ross and Rosemary Stacey, *John Wesley and Savannah: Savannah Images Project 1998*, Archived from the original on 19 January 2000. <https://web.archive.org/web/20000119090526/http://www.sip.armstrong.edu/Methodism/wesley.html>

²⁶ Geordan Hammond, *John Wesley in America: Restoring Primitive Christianity* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press 2014), 3.

group of devoted Christians who met in several small group religious societies. At the same time, attendance at Communion increased over the course of nearly two years in which he served as Christ Church's parish priest.²⁷

For all his difficulties, it was an unhappy love affair which proved to be Wesley's final undoing. Sophy Hopekey, niece and ward of Thomas Causton, the leading merchant and chief magistrate of the colony, became a focus of his attention. She visited the parsonage daily for prayers and French lessons. Though she was fifteen years younger than Wesley, affection developed. There was handholding, kisses, and discussion of marriage. Wesley went on a retreat to find direction. On return, he informed Sophy that if he married at all, it would be after he worked among the Indians. Later, Wesley prepared three lots, 'Marry', 'Think not of it this year', and 'Think of it no more'. On appealing to "the Searcher of hearts," he drew the third. Frustrated by Wesley's delays and diffidence, Hopekey abruptly married another suitor. Wesley subsequently repelled Sophy from communion, asserting she was becoming lax in religious enthusiasm, her offense being a lack of continued attendance at 5:00 a.m. prayers. At this point, the chief magistrate had Wesley arrested for defamation of character. The grand jury returned ten indictments and Wesley's case dragged on through Autumn 1737. Clearly, Wesley's useful ministry in Georgia was at an end. On Christmas Eve, he fled the colony to Charleston from where he set sail for England, never to return.²⁸ This portion of Wesley's life tends to reflect how we can do all that we believe God is leading us to and be so very wrong in how we

²⁷ Hammond, *John Wesley in America*, 29.

²⁸ New World Encyclopedia, s.v. "John Wesley."

carry out the mission. While Wesley led a life of diligent and continuous prayer, it can be non-effective if we do not pray the right prayer.

Wesley returned to England depressed and beaten. It was at this point that he turned to the Moravians. Both he and Charles received counsel from the young Moravian missionary Peter Bohler, who was temporarily in England awaiting permission to depart for Georgia himself.²⁹ Wesley wrote in his journal that “all this time I conversed much with Peter Bohler, but I understood him not; and least of all when he said, “My brother, my brother, that philosophy of yours must be purged away.”³⁰

Upon renewing his former resolutions, Wesley journaled,

Immediately it struck into my mind, “Leave off preaching. How can you preach to others, who have not faith yourself?” I asked Bohler whether he thought I should leave it off or not. He answered, “By no means.” I asked, “But what can I preach?” He said, “Preach faith till you have it; and then, because you have it, you will preach faith.”³¹ Wesley journaled:

On Monday, 6; I began preaching this new doctrine, though my soul started back from the work. The first person to whom I offered salvation by faith alone was a prisoner under sentence of death. His name was Clifford. Peter Bohler had many times desired me to speak to him before. But I could not prevail on myself so to do; being still, as I had been many years, a zealous asserter of the impossibility of a deathbed repentance.³²

Wesley’s revelation serves as the cornerstone of the problem for which this research project at St. Paul United Methodist Church is intended to address, which is the congregation lacks the understanding that evangelism is the mission of the church, and

29. J. F. Hurst, *John Wesley the Methodist: A Plain Account of His Life and Work*, ed. James Richard Joy (New York, NY: Cincinnati, OH: Eaton & Mains; Jennings & Pye, 1903), 95.

³⁰ Parker, *The Journal of John Wesley*, 50.

³¹ New World Encyclopedia, s.v. “John Wesley.”

³² Britannica Encyclopedia, s.v. “John Wesley.”

they are commissioned to carry out the mission. Wesley took Boehler's advice to heart and began vigorously preaching the doctrine of salvation by faith alone in London churches. However, his exuberant preaching alienated the establishment. By May 1738, he was banned from nine churches.³³ Wesley had also discovered Martin Luther's commentary on the Letter of Paul to the Galatians, which emphasized the scriptural doctrine of justification by grace through faith alone.³⁴

Conversion Experience

On May 24, 1738, Wesley wrote:

In the evening, I went very unwillingly to a society in Aldersgate Street, where one was reading Luther's preface to the Epistle to the Romans. About a quarter before nine, while he was describing the change which God works in the heart through faith in Christ, I felt my heart strangely warmed. I felt I did trust in Christ, Christ alone, for salvation; and an assurance was given me that He had taken away my sins, even mine, and saved me from the law of sin and death.³⁵

This was Wesley's conversion to which he openly testified to all those present. His Aldersgate conversion is usually understood to have been his experience of justification by faith. So, Wesley wrote, in his letter to "John Smith" several years later, that "from May 24, 1738, 'wherever I was desired to preach, salvation by faith was my only theme,'" and stated that it was perhaps because he neither preached nor knew the "pardoning love of God" through justification, "several of the Clergy forbade me their pulpits" before that time. He wrote in his letter to his older brother Samuel, that "until the time of his conversion he was not a Christian," i.e., not "one who so believes in Christ as

³³ Parker, *The Journal of John Wesley*, 56-57.

³⁴ New World Encyclopedia, s.v. "John Wesley."

³⁵ New World Encyclopedia, s.v. "John Wesley."

that sin hath no more dominion over him.”³⁶ This statement from Wesley is precisely why he was chosen as the historical character for this Doctor of Ministry project. So often this is what people believe of themselves, that they are not saved and therefore, cannot possibly speak of salvation through Jesus Christ to someone else. This is probably one of the greatest hindrances to evangelism. This research project was designed to explain God’s prevenient grace that keeps us and prepares us for salvation and that this grace and faith is what we stand upon as we evangelize.

Wesley’s enthusiasm and unrelenting preaching style began to expose that firebrand that had been plucked from the fire. From this point onward, at the age of thirty-five, Wesley viewed his mission in life as one of proclaiming the good news of salvation by faith, which he did whenever a pulpit was offered to him. The congregations of the Church of England, however, soon closed their doors to him because of his enthusiasm. He then went to religious societies, trying to inject new spiritual vigor into them, particularly by introducing “bands” similar to those of the Moravians – i.e., small groups within each society that were confined to members of the same sex and marital status who were prepared to share intimate details of their lives with each other and to receive mutual rebukes. For such groups, Wesley drew up Rules of the Band Societies in December 1738.³⁷ The desired outcome of this doctoral research project is that the participants will “catch on fire” and become as enthusiastic as Wesley as they undertake an evangelistic lifestyle.

³⁶ Britannica Encyclopedia, s.v. “John Wesley.”

³⁷ New World Encyclopedia, s.v. “John Wesley.”

Wesley's Oxford friend, the Evangelist George Whitefield, was also excluded from the churches of Bristol upon his return from America. Whitefield began preaching in the open to coal miners. The response was remarkable. Within a few months, thousands were responding. Through this innovation, Whitefield sparked the beginning of what would become England's eighteenth-century evangelical revival. Eager to extend the work but also having committed himself to return to Georgia, Whitefield begged Wesley to continue and organize the campaign. Wesley was hesitant. However, on casting lots with his brother Charles, Wesley decided it was God's will that he go. He arrived in Bristol on Saturday, March 31, 1739, and the next day witnessed Whitefield's preaching.³⁸

Most commentators recognize that Wesley's experience at Bristol marked an important transition in his ministry. Prior to this, his overriding concerns had been personal and parochial, that is, focused upon the well-being of his soul and the established church. However, Bristol transformed Wesley into an evangelist whose efforts would now focus on conveying salvation and holiness to the unchurched. It is this moment that is the spark for the Methodist movement and denomination. The pivotal moment that is the true mark of an evangelist. Although he had hoped to be a missionary to the Indians, Wesley at age thirty-six, found his calling among the outcast in England. For the next fifty years, Wesley continued the practice of itinerant evangelism.³⁹ Another desired outcome of this research project is that the participants would experience a

³⁸ Parker, *The Journal of John Wesley*, 59.

³⁹ John Wesley, *The Works of John Wesley*, 3rd edition (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Publishing, 1998), 394.

similar experience that will move them from being just church members to an evangelistic lifestyle that will enable them to share the gospel to those they encounter.

Late in 1739, Wesley broke with the Moravians in London. Wesley had helped them organize the Fetter Lane Society, and those converted by his preaching and that of his brother and Whitefield had become members of their bands. But he believed they fell into heresy by supporting quietism (where the believer stopped doing any good works or acts of worship until he experienced a filling of the Holy Spirit and the attainment of Perfect faith),⁴⁰ so he decided to form his own group of followers. He began the Methodist Society in England and soon formed similar societies in Bristol and Kingswood.

Conclusion

The skills and abilities that John Wesley possessed serve as the premise for this Doctor of Ministry research project “Developing a Training Model for Evangelism at St. Paul United Methodist Church, Dallas, Texas.” John Wesley finally achieved his God ordained purpose at the age of thirty-six. This is important because it emphasizes that God can use us at any age. Primarily because Wesley did not seek the limelight, fame, or fortune, but his methodology, his lifestyle, his teachings were the result of his journey to salvation. He was autonomous in his pursuit of salvation and a holy life. Wesley came to understand that the mission of the church was and is to make disciples. The participants in this research project were to be taught how to pursue evangelism in their life and

⁴⁰ Britannica Encyclopedia, s.v. “Quietism,” <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Quietism>.

lifestyle and that they are to understand that evangelism is the studious sharing of their Christian life and journey.

In reviewing John Wesley's life and ministry, we were given insight into how he became more than just a follower of Jesus Christ, we were privy to his journey as he became a disciple of Jesus Christ. It is to be noted that his mother appeared to be the greatest influence on how he approached life, and he carried that wisdom and knowledge into his approach to life and ministry. Her methodical approach to teaching and raising her children became the foundation of Wesley's life. Hence, his methodical and organizational approach to everything that he undertook bordered on compulsion. Her rules were the cornerstone for his ministry. The sage advice she gave him when she learned he was seeking ordination into ministry to "enter upon a serious examination of yourself, that you may know whether you have a reasonable hope of salvation" was pivotal. Regular study of the scriptures was emphasized in this research project as the catalyst to being open to an increased knowledge of the gospel message of salvation which the participants are to offer to those to whom they evangelize.

Wesley placed an extraordinary amount of emphasis upon prayer in his life. Along with rising at 4:00 a.m. every morning to pray, he also prayed with the members of the Holy Club, as well as every waking hour for several minutes for special virtue. His focus was sharp and clear as to what he hoped to achieve during his prayer time. Wesley had a strong prayer life. It would be extremely hard to attempt to live a holy life without prayer. Wesley appeared to understand that prayer was the centering and essence from which a holy life could be obtained. Trials came as Wesley certainly endured some during his time in America and after his return to Bristol when he was banished from

preaching in the churches. Prayer did not stop the trials that Wesley faced, but he was faithful to his purpose and his mission. This prayer life modeled by John Wesley is vital, although not everyone could handle the rigid 4:00 a.m. prayer schedule. Nor could they; in our modern times, it is just not feasible. However, when a person seeks to please God and seek His direction for their life, they will go to extraordinary measures. Wesley did not do anything in life or ministry without praying about it. Although it appeared some of his prayers may have been amiss based on his experiences in America. Prayer was preeminent in this research project for the participants to fully experience what a daily prayer life can be and can do for them. Each participant was asked to maintain a consistent and methodical prayer life during this project and was asked to document it in their journal.

Another great influence upon John Wesley's life was that of the Moravians, whom he believed possessed a greater witness and an inner strength that he lacked. To have his witness and his character questioned by the Moravian pastor, Augustus Spangenberg opened a hunger within Wesley to attain that level of faith, fearlessness, and inner strength that the Moravians possessed. The Moravians were instrumental in his conversion and belief in salvation by faith alone which became foundational in his evangelistic ministry.

There are some key takeaways from this analysis of Wesley's life, with the first takeaway being we must be steadfast in prayer. Prayer serves so many purposes: it strengthens us, it prepares us, and through prayer, the Lord speaks to us. Prayer connects us to the source, our source, which is God our Father. The second takeaway is that a life lived utilizing a methodical and organized approach to our spiritual journey will enable

us to recognize whether we are achieving what we had hoped to accomplish but also enlighten us when we are missing the mark or have fallen short. Consistency is necessary; honestly, journaling is one of the best techniques available to view our progress. While journaling, we can examine ourselves and write down what we are feeling and what we have learned in our experience. Also, Wesley maintained a small group of like-minded individuals with which he could discuss his journey, the things he had done, what he had learned as did each of the members. It was a great way to not be so reliant upon his own thought processes, but to have assistance in determining whether he was following God's law. The final takeaway is that studying and meditating in the word of God is imperative in knowing who God is and in knowing what a holy life is supposed to be. We are to follow Christ and the only way to follow Him is to know who He is. This is what we expound in evangelism.

The basic tenets John Wesley used: prayer, study of the word and journaling were used as a model for this doctoral research project. This enabled the participants, as well as the researcher, to remain apprised of their own journey and determine within themselves whether they were on the right track.

The next chapter identifies the theological foundation that provided the fundamental basis for the Doctor of Ministry project, "Developing a Training Model for Evangelism at St. Paul United Methodist Church, Dallas, Texas."

CHAPTER FOUR

THEOLOGICAL FOUNDATIONS

Introduction

Methodology is a crucial element of Christian Theology. Owen Thomas in his book *Introduction to Theology*, states “it is faith seeking understanding, through which the church in every age reflects on the basis of its existence and the content of its message.”¹ This introduction offers the process undertaken to ascertain the relevant theological perspective for this doctoral research project. The second section expounds upon evangelical theology and the specific tenets that provide the optimal theological perspective for this research project. The final section summarizes the chapter and how these specific tenets informed this research project. While it may be acceptable to teach just one aspect of something and be completely satisfied that the one aspect is accomplishing the mission, repetition without understanding will not yield the greatest rewards. The rewards will be so much greater when the teaching includes the history behind the action and the full context of what is being taught. It is incumbent upon those who are teaching about evangelism to expound upon the fact that the entirety of the Bible encompasses the whole story of the gospel message being provided to followers of Jesus Christ.

¹ Owen C. Thomas and Ellen K. Wondra, *Introduction to Theology*, 3rd ed. (Harrisburg, PA: Morehouse, 2002), 1.

Fundamentally, it would appear that the theological focus of this doctoral research project would especially lean toward Christian Theology, which Dale Moody defines in his book *The Word of Truth* as “an effort to think coherently about the basic beliefs that create a community of faith around the person of Jesus Christ.”² As followers of Christ, our perspective of the biblical message is Christian, however, the ultimate purpose of our study of the Bible and the persons of God the Father, Jesus Christ the Son and the Holy Spirit is to enable us to really know and understand the kingdom of God and who Jesus is in relation to God. Therefore, an evangelical theological approach provides greater clarity into the full message of the Bible and how the person of Jesus Christ is entwined within its pages from Genesis to Revelation. Evangelical theology shares a fidelity with orthodox Protestant teachings of the triune nature of God as Creator, the incarnation, crucifixion, and resurrection of His Son, Jesus Christ, and the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. The word evangelical is from the Greek word *euangelion* which is defined as “the good news” or “gospel” and evangelicals’ faith is focused on the good news of salvation brought to sinners through Jesus Christ.

Once the focus of the research determined that this was the optimal theological doctrine for this doctoral research project, it was immediately discounted. Current culture and religious fervor surrounding “evangelical” theology is so negative and detrimental to the Bible and the person of Jesus Christ that no “sane” Christian wishes to be associated with it. However, it became necessary to deep dive into evangelical theology to ascertain at which point the disconnect occurred and whether “evangelicalism” had strayed so far from the gospel message that it could not come back.

² Dale Moody, *The Word of Truth* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1981), 1.

Evangelical Theology

Michael F. Bird in his book *Evangelical Theology: A Biblical and Systematic Introduction* explains that the evangelical designation can be construed as anything from fundamentalist to a cultural term describing those aligned with a particular social and political bent associated with conservative American politics to being synonymous with a particularly Reformed expression of theology and practice.³

However, extensive research found that every faction of “evangelicals” shares the same basic evangelical theology. The theology that believes in salvation, the Trinity, worship, sanctification, the end time, that emphasizes the importance of evangelism, and affirms the authority as well as the historicity of the Bible. This is the theology that informs and supports the hypothesis and problem statement of this doctoral research project, “Developing a Training Model for Evangelism at St. Paul United Methodist Church, Dallas, Texas.” For Christians the gospel message is the core of the church’s mission. As followers of Jesus Christ our God given mission is to tell the world the story of salvation through Jesus Christ. Before we can take a closer look at evangelical theology, we must understand theology. Theology is the critical study of the nature of God and God’s revelation of Himself in relation to humanity and the world as revealed in the Bible.

Due to a lack of understanding of what the “evangelicals” were preaching and teaching led to the need to hear and see what was causing the disconnect and ascertain why the chasm was so great amongst believers. A quick foray onto X (formerly Twitter)

³ Michael F. Bird, *Evangelical Theology: A Biblical and Systematic Introduction*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Academic, 2020), xxv.

and YouTube provided much needed enlightenment while watching and listening to the teaching and preaching from some of the more well-known evangelical pastors. What was learned is that the true word of God was not being taught instead scripture was given but taught with varied slants that appeared to be the word of God. It requires study of the word to notice the subtle differences. The moment was staggering as this researcher's belief had been that everyone preached the same gospel. Chalk it to naivete as the researcher had never attended any services at an evangelical church.

The evangelical movement's origins began around 1878 in a meeting of the "Believers' Meeting for Bible Study" (Niagara Bible Conference), where 14 fundamental beliefs were established by evangelical pastors. After the Civil War tensions developed and after World War 1 a split occurred. This resulted in one church providing a definition of five "fundamentals" some of which included the inspiration of the Bible by the Holy Spirit and the inerrancy of scripture in 1910. While another church developed the doctrine of inerrancy from the 1840s to 1920. In the early 1940s, evangelicals and fundamentalist Christians began to part ways over whether to separate from modern culture or engage it.

The interpretations given to the fundamentalist movement have changed over time. Fundamentalism was seen as a form of anti-intellectualism during the 1950s. Although fundamentalism in the United States began in the North, the movement's largest base of support was in the South, especially among Southern Baptists. The term "evangelical" includes fundamentalists as well as people with similar or identical religious beliefs.

Jerry Falwell, founder of the Moral Majority, was key in the formation of the “New Christian Right.” The latter half of the twentieth century witnessed a surge of interest in organized political activism by United States fundamentalists. Interestingly, dispensational fundamentalists viewed the 1948 establishment of the state of Israel as an important sign of the fulfillment of biblical prophecy, and support for Israel became the centerpiece of their approach to the United States approach to foreign policy. Leaders of the newly political fundamentalism began to have a major impact on American politics. In the 1980s and 1990s, the Christian Right was influencing elections and policy, and helping conservative politicians, especially Republicans, to win state and national elections. Truly this faction of supposed followers of Jesus Christ are more concerned with their own personal agendas and not with the mission given to them through The Great Commission.

Research indicates that evangelical theology has not changed, instead it is man’s interpretation of what should be prioritized within this theological designation that is ever changing. At the core of each subgroup of evangelicals whether they be complementarian church planters, evangelicals who remain within mainline denominations, social justice evangelicals, charismatic evangelicals or liturgical evangelicals is foundation contained in the original distinctive beliefs of evangelical theology. These are:

- the supreme authority of Scripture for knowledge of God and as guide to Christian living;
- the majesty of Jesus Christ as incarnate God and Lord and as the Savior of sinful humanity;
- the Lordship of the Holy Spirit.

- the need for personal conversion;
- the priority of evangelism for both individual Christians and for the church as a whole; and
- the importance of Christian community for spiritual nourishment, fellowship, and growth.⁴

The goal of this doctoral research project was not to burden the participants with deep theological ideologies, nor to encumber them with information overload, but to teach the primary gospel message of the life and work of Jesus Christ which would equip them with a rationale for their evangelistic witness, predicated upon their own personal relationship with the Lord. Authors Anizor, Price and Voss in their book, *Doing Theology: Evangelical Theology* state, “evangelical theology is oriented around the personal—personal faith, personal conversion, personal experience, and personal mission. The Bible is no mere catalog of things to believe and ways to behave. It is what God says to me personally. It is the big story that makes sense of my own life story.”⁵ It can be said with surety that the disciples were probably afforded a much greater depth of knowledge from Jesus over their three years together than the elements provided in the chosen pericope. This doctoral research project is offered as a foundation upon which the participants can implement their personal testimony into their evangelistic witness as they continue to study God’s word. As such, evangelical theology speaks to the intent of this project.

⁴ Alister E. McGrath, *Evangelicalism and the Future of Christianity* (Leicester, UK: Inter-Varsity Press, 1995), 51.

⁵ Uche Anizor, Robert B. Price, and Hank Voss, *Doing Theology: Evangelical Theology* (London, UK: T&T Clark, 2021), 3.

Extensive research into evangelical theology uncovered a plethora of schools of thought, discussions and arguments into different theological concepts and beliefs about the gospel message and what constitutes evangelical theology. Evangelical theology is a systematic theology that provides clarification and unity to the diverse body of biblical materials contending that the gospel is the core of our faith. Deep within the confines of our Christian faith is the strong belief that the Bible is the inspired word of God, and it is upon that belief and witness that we as Christians and followers of Jesus Christ stand firm. The very foundation of the church is built upon and shored up by this every day. It is upon this doctrinal certainty that this doctoral research project is established and braced. Every part of this project is scripturally based and has been specifically designed to lead the participants to the scriptures for validation and further study. It was disturbing to find, during this research, an essay written by Philip E. Hughes, “The Inspiration of the Bible,” *Basics of Faith: An Evangelical Introduction to Christian Doctrine* that his research discovered that “It is only in modern times that leaders within the Christian church assailed the doctrine of the inspiration of the Bible.” He goes on to state that “the Bible is, indeed, now widely regarded as a book of human, not divine, origin—inspired only in the humanistic sense that the Hebrews, who wrote it, had a genius for religion, just as the Greeks had a genius for philosophy, and the Romans a genius for government.”⁶ Unfortunately, this revelation is manifested in today’s society and culture. We can say with certainty that the participants would more than likely encounter someone who holds to this belief as they share their faith with others. This doctoral

⁶ Carl F. H. Henry, ed., *Basics of the Faith: An Evangelical Introduction to Christian Doctrine* (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2019), 22.

research project will reiterate the sanctity of the scriptures and the infallibility of God's word. Of course, it would be very difficult to adhere oneself to the Jesus Christ in the gospel if one does not believe the gospel message to be the inspired word of God. We undertake to promote the fact that the Bible bears witness to itself. Therefore, each lesson was written to solidify and reinforce this fact. We endeavored to lift the most important aspects of the scriptures that speak to and reinforce the gospel message.

Beginning with the Old Testament from Genesis forward, the Bible speaks of and for God the Father. Every word from God has been prefaced by such terms as "Thus saith the Lord" and "The word of the Lord came unto me, saying...." These scriptures provide us with the nature and characteristics of a loving God in relationship with His people. The prophets of the Old Testament were led and directed by the voice of God concerning God's people. The prophets received the word of God and then spoke it. However, not every word given to the prophets was written. The messages from the prophets, Moses and the people of God were passed down through oral tradition, and finally written down years later. And not every word was recorded. For those of us that are not of Jewish heritage our reliance must be upon the scriptures recorded in the Bible.

As stated above, the definition of evangelical theology contains numerous schools of thought, encompassing other doctrines and differentiation of whether each doctrine should be considered fundamental or secondary to evangelical belief, as well as debatable points as to what constitutes the gospel message. Evangelical theology begins with the foundational belief that there is a God of creation who is eternally present and revealed in three divine persons: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit who share the divine essence co-equally and simultaneously. Thus, they are a trinity. This trinity does not speak of

multiple gods but three persons in the one divine essence. Any subordination among the persons is solely based on their functional roles outside the trinity. In their very being they are equal, yet distinct manifestations of the one divine nature.

Through years of ministry, it is apparent that many church members do not understand the doctrine of the Trinity. The doctrine of the Trinity does not appear as such in the Bible as a subsection of a particular chapter or verse, but it is the implication of the biblical testimony. Michael Bird submits that, “the nature of God’s being, the person of the Father and the Spirit, and the divine purpose and plan—these are what provide the person and work of Christ with their currency and cogency.”⁷ Thomas relates that the Bible contains the “seeds of the Trinitarian understanding of God,” and the “beginnings of a Trinitarian theology,” from which the doctrine of the Trinity was a “natural and necessary development.” The doctrine of the Trinity is the result of the church’s reflection on the biblical testimony in the face of various distorted interpretations.⁸

From the first book of the Bible, Genesis, we are given the express witness of the triune God when God spoke and said, “Let there be...” and it was done. Those statements denote that God was not alone in creation. For the sake of clarity, there are verses that identify when God created something, i.e., Genesis 1:4, “And God saw that the light was good; and God separated the light from darkness. Verse sixteen, “And God made the two great lights, the greater light to govern the day, and the lesser light to govern the night; He made the stars also. Genesis also introduces us to the Holy Spirit in verse two, “And the earth was formless and void, and darkness was over the surface of the deep; and the

⁷ Bird, *Evangelical Theology*, 101.

⁸ Thomas and Wondra, *Introduction to Theology*, 67.

Spirit of God was moving over the surface of the waters. We are introduced to Jesus in verse twenty-six, “Then God said, let us make man in our image, according to our likeness....” John in his gospel makes us aware beginning with verse one, that it was Jesus that was with God in creation,

In the beginning was the Word, (Jesus, the Logos, the Word) and the Word was with God and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things came into being by Him and apart from Him nothing came into being that has come into being. (Jn. 1:1-3)

G. Ernest Wright expresses in his article “The Faith of Israel” in *The New Interpreter’s Bible*, “All of the anthropomorphisms of the Old Testament interpret the unity of Yahweh on the analogy of the unity of the human self. There are certain divine attributes or powers, such as Spirit, Word, and Wisdom, that are distinguished and tend to be personalized and hypostasized.”⁹ Thomas states that these terms refer to extensions of God’s personal presence and powerful activity in relation to the world. In other words, the New Testament authors were able to understand the relation of the Son and the Spirit to the Father in a way roughly analogous to how the Old Testament authors understood the relation of Word, Spirit, and Wisdom to Yahweh.”¹⁰

Jesus Christ being the second person of the Holy Trinity, is identified as the only begotten Son of God the Father. We must be clear when teaching about Jesus Christ and His mission and purpose for being is the fact that He was with God the Father from the beginning of creation and did not just appear in the New Testament. The focus of this doctoral research project is to bestow the knowledge to the participants that the Messiah

⁹ G. Ernest Wright, “The Faith of Israel,” *New Interpreter’s Bible*, 12 vols., ed. George Arthur Buttrick (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1952-57), 1:366f.

¹⁰ Thomas and Wondra, *Introduction to Theology*, 68.

spoken of in the Old Testament was culminated in the person of Jesus Christ. This is clearly what evangelism is all about. This is the gospel message, and we cannot evangelize without Jesus Christ. Christology, or the doctrine of Christ is not one topic or part of systematic theology but the basis of the whole. Thomas states that “the doctrine of Christ is not an added difficulty for the doctrine of God but the only way in which it can be expressed.”¹¹ Christology is not a matter of attempting to reconcile the incarnation with a doctrine of God that we have already – for example, from the Old Testament or from philosophy –but it is the basis of the Christian doctrine of God.¹² Hart states, “it is more appropriate to ask, ‘who is Jesus?’ than to ask, ‘Who was Jesus?’ for Jesus of Nazareth is both ‘a historical figure’ and ‘our eternal contemporary.’ And when he comes into someone’s life, he inevitably changes that person’s life.”¹³ Hart is supported when he writes, “in plainest terms, the distinctive Christian claim is that Jesus Christ was and is God incarnate. Jesus was crucified for making this claim.”¹⁴ In essence, the Lord Jesus at a particular time in the past became that which He was not before, a physical being. Before that He was essentially Spirit. Jesus became the expression of that Logos, that Word, that intelligence which is undiscoverable except through His word and works (Rom. 1:20). This is what we are to witness about, this is the mission of the church, this is our purpose.

¹¹ Thomas and Wondra, *Introduction to Theology*, 158.

¹² Thomas and Wondra, *Introduction to Theology*, 158.

¹³ Larry D. Hart, *Truth Aflame: Theology for the Church in Renewal* (Grand Rapids, MI: HarperCollins Christian Publishing, 2005), 279.

¹⁴ Hart, *Truth Aflame*, 281.

Thomas states that while it has been traditional to distinguish between the person and the work of Christ, twentieth-century theologians reasserted the unbreakable connection between Christology and soteriology (the doctrine of salvation). He further states that the work of Christ should be treated before the person of Christ because we know who Christ is through what Christ does in bringing salvation into the world.¹⁵ Hart states that Jesus is a historical person and the message we offer to the world is rooted in historical, public events that can be investigated. Jesus preached the kingdom of God and founded the church and as such we are a people called out to proclaim the reign of God – as did both Jesus and the early church.¹⁶ The fact that Jesus Christ is a historical being and there is much written about Him, offers to the participants study materials to aide them in further research and support what is being taught during this project.

Invariably, there is an onus to encourage the followers of Jesus Christ to reflect and recall a time or season where they had need and that need was met in response to their prayers to God through Jesus Christ. This is a totally experiential journey. But to know God, one must come by the way of the cross. Human wisdom cannot comprehend nor define the incarnation and though we try our efforts fall infinitely short.

The doctrine of salvation or atonement or soteriology is considered “the center of all Christian knowledge,” writes Thomas. “As center, this topic is integrally related to all other topics of Christian theology. Our task here is to inquire as to the nature and significance of the Christian gospel, the good news about God’s love manifested in Christ for our salvation.”¹⁷ There can be no separation for we can have no salvation without

¹⁵ Thomas and Wondra, *Introduction to Theology*, 158-159.

¹⁶ Hart, *Truth Aflame*, 20.

¹⁷ Thomas and Wondra, *Introduction to Theology*, 179.

Christ and without Christ there is no salvation. Soteriology, a branch of theology, does not exist apart from Jesus Christ. Salvation can be achieved only through Jesus Christ. This is the gospel message and the purpose for evangelism is to take this message to those who do not know Jesus in the pardon of their sins.

The resurrection of Jesus is the crux of the salvation message. John Stott expressed it this way, “What the resurrection did was to vindicate the Jesus whom men had rejected, to declare with power that He is the Son of God, and publicly to confirm that His sin-bearing death had been effective for the forgiveness of sins.”¹⁸ There has been a tendency within the Christian denominations to place a greater emphasis upon the crucifixion (carrying our cross) as the primary expression of the story of Jesus. It is imperative that the focus of the gospel message is upon the resurrection. Implicitly, Jesus died for all of mankind, but it is the fact that He rose and conquered death, hell and the grave that gives us hope.

This Doctor of Ministry research project, “Developing a Training Model for Evangelism at St. Paul United Methodist Church, Dallas, Texas” is designed to clarify that we are saved through the resurrection of Jesus Christ and not in having our sins crucified on the cross. Bird states it best when he writes, “Resurrection is also an indicator of the Trinitarian nature of salvation. The Father hands over the Son to the cross, then the Father raises the Son by the Spirit, afterward the Son dispenses the Spirit to believers, and the risen Son continually mediates between humanity and God the Father.”¹⁹

¹⁸ John Stott, *The Cross of Christ* (Westmont, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2006), 494.

¹⁹ Stott, *The Cross of Christ*, 501.

The Holy Spirit is identified as the third person of the trinity and is not simply a divine attribute or a divine function, but an agent in His own right. Pneumatology or the doctrine of the Holy Spirit is another branch of theology incorporated into evangelical theology. The term is derived from the Greek word *pneuma*, which is defined as “breath” or “spirit” and metaphorically describes a non-material being or influence. Thomas states,

The function of the Spirit is to bear witness to the revelation of the Father in the Son (1Cor, 2:10f.; Jn. 15:26). It is through the Son that we have the Spirit who bears witness to the Son and thus to the Son’s revelation of the Father, and who accomplishes in us the work of the Son, which is the will of the Father. The Spirit is God’s personal presence and activity in the world, from creation, through the history of Israel, especially in Jesus, and in the church as a foretaste of the fulfillment.²⁰

The Holy Spirit is fully God. It is the eternal manifestation of God in the human dimension. The witness of the Holy Spirit is contained within the Bible from the beginning in Genesis 1:2 “...and the Spirit of God was moving over the surface of the waters.” The Holy Spirit gave divine revelation to the prophets and of course the Holy Spirit inspired the writers of the Bible. For believers today the Holy Spirit produces the fruit of the Spirit: “love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, meekness and self-control” (Gal 5:22-23) all attributes of the Spirit living within. This doctoral research project is designed to explicate what it means to be filled with the Holy Spirit and how one is baptized with the Holy Spirit. As Jesus spoke to the apostles prior to His ascension He informed them that they would receive power when the Holy Spirit had come upon them to be His witnesses (Acts 1:8). Prior to the crucifixion Jesus had informed the disciples that He would ask the Father and He (the Father) would give them another Helper to be with them forever (Jn. 14:16) and He (the Holy Spirit) would teach

²⁰ Thomas and Wondra, *Introduction to Theology*, 69-70.

them all things, and bring to their remembrance all that Jesus had said to them (Jn. 14:26) and the Helper (the Holy Spirit) is the Spirit of the truth and He will bear witness of Jesus (Jn. 15:26). The emphasis to the participants of this doctoral research project was that bearing witness of Jesus Christ is not something to be done under their own power by attempting to memorize scriptures or some diatribe to be regurgitated, but it is accomplished through the power within them from the Holy Spirit to verbalize the saving grace they received from Jesus Christ.

There has been much debate as to how one is baptized with the Holy Spirit. Unfortunately, the day of Pentecost when the disciples were filled with the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:1-4) has wreaked havoc and resulted in much confusion in our churches and denominations. The tendency has been to stop reading at verse four, but if verse six is read there would be an understanding that what occurred on the day of Pentecost is that the disciples were given the ability to speak in the languages of the people gathered around them. The emphasis was to show those gathered around, who were not followers, that something truly miraculous had happened. The Holy Spirit was given to the disciples to guide them into all truth and that same Spirit, working in people's hearts, brings them to a faith in the gospel and continues to sustain them, causing them to have confidence in the Bible as a whole and opening them to the possibility of a life filled with a desire to know more about God.

The Holy Spirit cannot bring back to someone's remembrance what is not known. Therefore, emphasis was placed on the significance of studying the scriptures pertaining to the gospel message. The lessons were designed to provide the participants with the relevant scripture and then an expectation of self-study that would give them ample time

to learn at their own pace, seeking help from the Holy Spirit through prayer. However, the participants would be encouraged to have study and prayer partners to help with their understanding. “The beginning of wisdom is - acquire wisdom and with all your acquiring, get understanding.” (Prov. 4:7) The way to discipleship is through knowledge of the gospel story and what it means for those who are followers of Jesus Christ.

Attention was called to the reality that prayer is the key to being filled with the Holy Spirit as evidenced by the disciples in the Upper Room where they prayed for ten days prior to their infilling. Evangelical theology is relevant for discipleship because it is necessary to understand that the person of Jesus Christ is only a part of the story, but an integral part, nonetheless. Knowing the story will enable us to understand why Jesus came to earth and gave the ultimate sacrifice. Jesus had a mission from God the Father to come in the form of man, suffer at the hands of men, die, and rise again so that man could be reconciled to the Father. What Jesus did is experiential. Jesus was fully God and fully man, so the rejection He encountered and the suffering He undertook was experienced as a man. He knew what it meant to be hungry and tired. He felt every lash of the cat-o-nine tails. Hence, we as His followers can know and understand that this was not just mythology, but the story of all that He endured for us. We have experienced rejection, even the misfortune of harm to our physical bodies but we can have hope through the gospel message of Jesus Christ and live a life borne in faith through salvation. The desire is that the participants of this research project will become accustomed to studying the scriptures and praying so that they will seek the Holy Spirit for guidance and direction as they share their faith through evangelism. More importantly, if they are not filled with the Holy Spirit, they will desire and pray to be filled by the end of the project.

The goal of evangelism is to reveal the gospel message to those who do not know it in the effort to make disciples who will then go and make disciples. This is accomplished by spreading the good news of the gospel to those who do not believe in Jesus Christ or His message. The desired outcome is that unbelievers will repent of their sins and receive salvation. The desired outcome of this doctoral research project is to inspire the participants to understand that the mission of the church is to make disciples and endeavor to establish or be a part of an evangelistic ministry within the church as next steps. However, the impetus of this Doctor of Ministry research project, “Developing a Training Model for Evangelism at St. Paul United Methodist Church, Dallas, Texas” is to teach the participants the fundamentals of evangelism. The gospel message is simply that God wants us to know His love, His gift, and His offer of salvation (John 3:16). Love is a central part of the Bible, and especially important in all of Jesus’ teachings. Jesus dedicated His life to helping others and spreading love throughout the world. He taught His disciples and us (through the Bible) that He wanted them to do the same, so that every person on earth could come to God and experience His love. The aspiration is that the participants learn the gospel, not just memorize it, but assimilate this message into their lives and it thereby become rooted to their very core. With the message deeply embedded within, the participants can then engage in hospitality, be able to share their experiences and provide hope to those who don’t believe. The world is reaching a critical stage of isolation, hopelessness and despair and the gospel message provides a spark of light and newness. We desire to provide illumination to the fact we are not alone if we will just submit ourselves to Jesus and partake of the hope that is found only in salvation through Jesus Christ.

Evangelism should not be deemed successful in terms of whether someone comes to faith (this has been done in the past and is not the optimal method for winning souls for Christ), the purpose of our evangelical witness is to glorify God, through His Son, Jesus Christ. Our trust in God's work in people's lives is that He, through the Holy Spirit, is the one that is going to move people (1 Cor. 3:6). The message we want to leave with unbelievers is that through Jesus Christ's death and resurrection, we have a relationship with God that transforms our lives forever when we place our trust in Jesus.

In the sharing of the gospel message with unbelievers there is a need for the assurance of salvation. This is so important because it is through faith that we have a relationship with God. "For by grace you have been saved through faith..." (Eph. 2:8). A highlight from John Wesley's spiritual journey. The gospel message shared in love should be spoken in a manner that will lead those to whom we witness to the assurance that their lives can be transformed. While there is no physical change or outward celebration, this can be evidenced through a renewed hope in this life. This is faith. Hebrews 11:1 reads: "Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen." This is why it was imperative to ascertain where the participants were in their spiritual journey because it would be from their point of experience that they share the gospel story. Bird states so eloquently: "The life, the power, which flows through the channels of faith is the ultimate energy of the universe: God's love—the love which God is."²¹

And lastly, in evangelical theology evangelism, sharing the good news of the gospel is the mission of the church. The church is where we gain insight into the person

²¹ Bird, *Evangelical Theology*, 155.

and work of Jesus Christ and receive a deeper understanding of who we are in Christ.

This reinforces the hypothesis of this doctoral research project regarding training as it is desired that the participants would receive enough training to become confident in their witness to others, however, the participants themselves are encouraged to receive additional training through continued study at the church and on their own. They were also encouraged to inform the people to whom they witness to also attend church. God's church is where love abides, and the evangelistic mission is to bring those outside the walls of this love in to worship the Lord in communion. For many congregants showing up at church to hear the sermon serves as enough reason for someone to seek salvation through Jesus Christ. But in the reality of many people's lives a sermon is just a snippet of the gospel message. How much greater the impact of the gospel message when delivered one on one from someone who has experienced God's love and the joy of salvation. Hence, the message cannot be delivered just by word, but also in our lifestyle. Our witness cannot be very effective, if we are telling people they need to repent of their sins and come to Jesus and we are living lives so much more sinful. True evangelistic witness encompasses not just our words, what we say and how we say it, but also how we live, how we react in varied situations and how we treat our fellow man. Prevalent today is this distorted picture of what a Christian should look like, what a Christian should act like and how a Christian should treat their fellow man. While evangelistic ministry has never been easy, it now faces even greater obstacles because of this.

Somewhere the evangelistic mission changed from spreading the love of God to a demand to follow what someone believes. Somewhere we got off track and became judgmental and dogmatic in our approach to evangelism. Instead of inviting others to this

place of peace, the church began spouting a litany of hell fire and brimstone as the mantra for coming to Christ. This was never God's purpose nor was it the reason Jesus gave His life. Love is the foundation of the gospel message and love is the answer. Understanding that one cannot be compelled to love, but by experiencing the gospel message through this doctoral research project, the participants will become immersed in the love the Father has for us by sending His Son to reconcile us back to Him. More importantly, the love Jesus Christ had for humanity in that He would lay down His life for us.

This doctoral research project was designed to encourage the participants to make love the preeminent purpose of our evangelistic mission. By sharing, as they witness, that coming to church is not only for purposes of worshiping God, but it is a place where we can lift and encourage one another as the Holy Spirit comes to empower and enlighten. We will encourage attendance, but not demand. We must hold onto the words of Paul in Ephesians 4:1-3, "being diligent to preserve the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace." Unity is what binds us to Jesus Christ and to one another. This is a great undertaking in the fact that a few in number will be trained to evangelize and then continue to train and evangelize. But is it not the epitome of the gospel message? A few were trained, given the authority, and then sent forth to complete the mission. Hopefully, this message became clear to the participants as well.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the tenets of evangelical theology were determined to be the most effective theological discipline that best informed this Doctor of Ministry research project, "Developing a Training Model for Evangelism at St. Paul United Methodist

Church, Dallas, Texas.” In essence it explored and expounded upon the gospel message by providing lucidity to the biblical story and all facets of the scriptures from the Old Testament to the New Testament in how God’s plan for us was carried out through His Son, Jesus Christ. Methodology was certainly crucial to how the story of the gospel was presented to the participants of this doctoral research project. The lessons were designed to promote the doctrine of the trinity as the best way to educate how sharing the gospel message is the mission of the church. Thereby enabling the participants to grow in the knowledge of the story of God’s creation and His continued love in the lives of His creation, in spite of our rebellion and selfishness.

The facets of evangelical theology that provided the focus for this doctoral research project were the evangelism, repentance, and traditional Christian teachings about the authority of the Bible. Because theology is faith seeking understanding through critical study of the nature of God, humanity, and God’s creation, this evangelical theology aligns with the Protestant orthodoxy that emphasizes the good news of salvation through Jesus Christ and how the Bible is the inspired word of God, and bears witness of itself. The Bible does not contain chapter or verse that specifically identifies the trinity, but there is an implication in its biblical testimony of the triune nature of God the Father, Jesus Christ the Son, and the Holy Spirit. As Michael Bird stated, “the nature of God’s being, the person of the Father and the Spirit, and the divine purpose and plan are what provide the person and work of Christ with currency and cogency.”²²

It became necessary to expound upon the term and people “evangelicals” who have literally torn and destroyed God’s message of love through their hate filled rhetoric.

²² Bird, *Evangelical Theology*, 101.

It was amazing to learn that these people proudly proclaim that the theology that believes in salvation, the Trinity, worship, sanctification, the end time, that emphasizes the importance of evangelism and affirms the authority as well as the historicity of the Bible stubbornly hold to the inerrancy of the Bible. Yet their methodology and their lifestyles promote a different picture. While these persons are studious in their approach to evangelical theology it does not change the reality of this theological designation.

The first person of the Trinity is God the Father, creator of heaven and earth. The witness of the triune God was evidenced from the beginning in Genesis as it denoted that God was not alone in creation. Jesus Christ the second person of the trinity is identified as the only begotten Son of God the Father. The Messiah spoken of and alluded to in the Old Testament was culminated in the person of Jesus Christ. Our evangelistic mission is to tell this story. It was in this place, this posture that Jesus' mission was, by design, to reconcile man back to the Father by taking on the load of man's sinfulness upon His shoulders, through His death, and thereby provide a way for man to escape his sinful mind and heart. But the good news is that in His resurrection, when the Father raised Him from the dead, He rose with all power in His hand because He had conquered death, hell, and the grave. Entwined in this story was God's plan to help mankind hold fast to their newly found salvation and faith by being filled with the Holy Spirit, the third person of the Trinity. It is imperative to note that prayer is essential to the in-filling and baptism of the Holy Spirit. Prayer is indispensable in the life of the Christian and even more so to those who evangelize. Prayer is how we converse with the Holy Spirit as He guides us in all ways and truth.

Faith is what sustains us and what we exude to others as we live out our evangelistic mission, standing on the assurance of things hoped for. Our faith grows as we gather “making every effort to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace” (Eph 4:3). The evangelistic mission is to make disciples as we are sent from (Jerusalem) the church to bring the new converts back to the church. The church is where additional teaching of the Bible is carried out, it is where we come to worship our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ and where the love of God permeates our souls with joy and gladness.

We are at a crossroads where hope is slipping away with each new day. One can find themselves identifying with the disciples when all their hopes had been placed upon Jesus only to witness His cruel death to crucifixion. We are watching as Christianity is used as a political tool shifting its attributes from the love of God and the promise of salvation in Jesus Christ to a demand to follow the one with the most money and power. Evangelistic outreach was once steeped in the rhetorical question, “if you were to die today, where would you spend eternity?” When true evangelism should be focused on where people are in the here and now and facing forward. Ultimately, the goal is to spend eternity with Jesus, however, we can have victorious and joyful lives in the present by living and sharing the love of Jesus with our neighbors which is the commission Jesus ascribed to His disciples. Paul proclaims, “I have become its servant by the commission God gave me to present to you the word of God in its fullness... To them God has chosen to make known among the Gentiles the glorious riches of this mystery, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory” (Col. 1:25, 27). It was imperative that this Doctor of Ministry research project, “Developing a Training Model for Evangelism at St. Paul United Methodist Church, Dallas, Texas” clearly identify and address the ills of today’s society

and how the gospel message speaks to those ills. The next chapter will identify the interdisciplinary perspective that best informs this Doctor of Ministry Project.

CHAPTER FIVE

INTERDISCIPLINARY FOUNDATIONS

Introduction

A review of the academic disciplines of psychology, sociology, philosophy, and the humanities indicated that each discipline provided valuable insights and perspectives for this doctoral research project. This introduction identifies the processes involved that led to the interdisciplinary foundation for this doctoral research project. The second section of this chapter provides an exhaustive review of Cognitive Behavioral Theory (CBT) and how Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT) approaches were adapted into the curriculum for this research project. And the final section summarizes the adaptability of CBT approaches. Allen Repko and Rick Szostak in their book, *Interdisciplinary Research: Process and Theory* offer that “the epistemology of psychology is that psychological constructs and their interrelationships can be inferred through discussion and observation and applied to treatment (clinical) or a series of experiments with slight variations (experimental).”¹ They go on to reflect that “for both empiricist and rationalist positions, one of the major concerns is to ascertain whether the means of getting knowledge are trustworthy. The chief concerns of epistemology in this regard are memory, judgment, introspection, reasoning, “a priori-a posteriori” distinction, and the

¹ Allen F. Repko and Rick Szostak, *Interdisciplinary Research: Process and Theory*, 3rd ed. (Los Angeles, CA: Sage, 2017), 48.

scientific method.”² Important variables for someone relying upon recalling their experiential relationship with Jesus Christ while evangelizing. The assumptions from both modernist and postmodernist schools of thought offer choices that could effectively sway the outcome of the analytical research data. Through extensive research, it was determined that taking an interdisciplinary approach would be instrumental in avoiding both the extremes of modernist optimistic theory and the pessimism of the postmodernist theory that could render the outcome of the doctoral research project impractical. Repko also promotes that “psychologists assume that data obtained through systematic empiricism allows researchers to draw more confident conclusions than they can from casual observation alone.”³ Hence an interdisciplinary approach with a perspective on cognitive theory which focused on how internal thoughts and feelings influence one’s behavior and the perspective of behavioral psychology which is an understanding of behavior through different types of conditioning best informed and supported the hypothesis and problem statement of this doctoral research project. This cognitive approach emphasized the importance of memory, perception and attention, language, decision-making and problem-solving. Cognitive psychology touches on many aspects of our daily lives, such as providing help in coping with memory disorders, making better decisions, recovering from brain injury, treating learning disorders, and structuring curricula to enhance learning. While behavioral psychology relates that behavior is a product of both the situation (e.g. cultural influences, social roles, and the presence of

² Repko and Szostak, *Interdisciplinary Research*, 50.

³ Repko and Szostak, *Interdisciplinary Research*, 56.

others) and the personality characteristics of the individual. Both psychological schools would apply in evangelism.

Sharing one's faith has never been easy within congregations, primarily because there has not been a great deal of teaching about it in our churches. There has been an impetus to do it, without identifying why or how it is to be done. Sharing one's faith simply denotes telling the good news of Jesus Christ, what He did for all of mankind and how one's life was changed through the gospel message. While lack of training is often proposed as the reasoning for the congregation's unwillingness to "make disciples," there appears to be a greater obstacle weighing upon the congregation at St. Paul United Methodist Church and that is the effects of depression and a sense of hopelessness which had been exacerbated by the 2020 pandemic. The methodology required to enable the congregants to overcome the effects of this hopelessness could be incorporated into the evangelism training by utilizing techniques that would enable the congregants to help themselves.

Shoshana Ringel in the book, *Trauma: Contemporary Directions in Theory, Practice and Research* wrote that contemporary trauma theory in civilian contexts developed following the 1942 Cocoanut Grove fire in Boston. During that fire, 493 people perished in a nightclub, many of them trampled to death. Following the tragedy, Dr. Lindemann, who treated several survivors, observed that they displayed common responses. He began to theorize about normal grief reactions, including preoccupation

with lost loved ones, identification with the deceased, expressions of guilt and hostility, disorganization, and somatic complaints.⁴

Cognitive Behavioral Theory (CBT)

Cognitive Behavioral Theory asserts that it is the way we think about a situation, rather than the situation itself, that leads us to feel a particular emotion and behave a particular way. The impetus for this evangelism training was to enable the participants to change these emotions and this outlook. Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT) is a type of psychotherapy that can help change unhealthy ways of thinking, feeling, and behaving. Some of the CBT strategies may include exposing oneself to situations that cause anxiety or journaling about thoughts and recording one's reactions and thoughts. Leslie Sokol and Marci Fox in their book, *The Comprehensive Guide to Cognitive Behavioral Therapy* wrote that thinking tends to be negatively biased among clients with depression, and this bias is demonstrated in three major spheres of thinking. Namely, clients with depression experience a negative view of the self, the future, and the world. For example, they may view themselves as worthless (self), believe that nothing will ever get better (future), and assume that no one cares about them (world). This triad of negative biases is associated with paralysis of will, depressed mood, suicidal ideations, increased dependency, avoidance, and social withdrawal.⁵

Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT) approaches are rooted in the fundamental principle that an individual's cognitions play a significant and primary role in the

⁴ Shoshana Ringel, ed., *Trauma: Contemporary Directions in Theory, Practice, and Research* (Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications, Inc., 2012), <https://doi.org/10.4135/9781452230597>.

⁵ Leslie Sokol and Marci Fox, *The Comprehensive Clinician's Guide to Cognitive Behavioral Therapy* (Eau Claire, WI: PESI, 2019), ProQuest Ebook Central.

development and maintenance of emotional and behavioral responses to life situations. In CBT models, cognitive processes, in the form of meanings, judgments, appraisals, and assumptions associated with specific life events, are the primary determinants of one's feelings and actions and can either facilitate or hinder the process of adaptation.⁶ CBT suggests that our thoughts, emotions, body sensations, and behavior are all connected, and that what we think and do affects the way we feel. CBT is a talking therapy that can help manage one's problems by changing the way one thinks and behaves. It is most often used to treat anxiety and depression but can be useful for other mental and physical health problems. These approaches were instrumental in the formulation of the lesson plans that were used for this Doctor of Ministry research project, "Developing a Training Model for Evangelism at St. Paul United Methodist Church, Dallas, Texas." Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT) is a treatment approach that provides us with a way of understanding our experiences of the world and enabling us to make changes if needed. Because evangelism is based upon one sharing one's personal experience with Jesus Christ the goal of this doctoral project was to turn these experiences into positive thoughts that would promote positive interactions. This is accomplished by dividing our experiences into four central components: thoughts (cognitions), feelings (emotions), behaviors, and physiology (your biology).

The reasoning in choosing this interdisciplinary approach was predicated upon the disciple's reaction after Jesus was crucified, which is highlighted in the pericope from the biblical foundations chapter. Jesus found some of His followers crying and lost because

⁶ A. Antonio González-Prendes and Stella M. Resko, eds., *Trauma: Contemporary Directions in Theory, Practice, and Research* (Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications, Inc., 2012), <https://doi.org/10.4135/9781452230597>.

all their hopes and expectations for the future had changed suddenly. They had walked with Jesus and believed Him when He told them that He was the son of God and now He had been killed. Today, many older members of the church are witnessing the tremendous changes that have occurred in what was once a great gathering place on Sundays, where everyone came together to worship the Lord and for a few short hours were able to forget the troubles of the previous week. But with declining membership and changes to how worship was done, there was little resemblance to the joy-filled days of the past. The aftermath of a global pandemic had effectively changed the church forever, causing even the most loyal of congregants to hesitate regarding physically coming back to the church. By integrating the techniques from Cognitive Behavioral Therapy, our project design was constructed to address these concerns, leading to an understanding of this phenomena, and thus became instrumental in formulating solutions for the participants and later congregants and prayerfully increasing their desire to evangelize.

This cognitive model describes how people's thoughts and perceptions influence the way they feel and behave. Cognitive Behavioral Therapy involves six overlapping phases that can be adapted to a diverse set of populations with various disorders. The phases represent the different theoretical components of this multidimensional treatment. These phases will be accomplished during project implementation.

Six Phases of Cognitive Behavioral Theory (CBT)

Phase One

Phase one is an assessment about the learning and development of the participants. This will be beneficial in determining the best course of action. Phase one

was accomplished using survey questions. Lessons could then be adapted based on the pre-project survey.

Phase Two

Phase two is reconceptualization, which is the act or process of forming a new or different idea or principle in their mind from the one previously held. This would be accomplished through the lessons taught during project implementation as well as considering that there are four learning styles: visual, auditory, kinesthetic and reading/writing.

Phase Three

Phase three will aid the participants through the three stages of skill acquisition:

- *Stage one* is the cognitive stage, whereby the focus is on mental concentration and the thought processes involved in understanding and processing new information, before a new skill can be attempted. Due to time constraints for teaching the lessons (one hour on Sunday morning once a week), the participants were required to study at home. Journaling instructions were included in each lesson as well as any questions or thoughts the participants encountered during the lesson. This also included a time of prayer where the participant asks the Holy Spirit for understanding of the lesson and/or discussion. The participants were to then record in their journals the amount of time that they spent in prayer, whether they received an understanding of the lesson and any questions they may want to address at the next meeting.

- *Stage two* is progression from thinking about what the participant is doing to thinking about how they perform the skill. This information will be noted in the participants' journals.
- *Stage three*, the participant does not have to think about the skill he or she is performing, allowing their mind to focus on other events or processes around them. This will be evidenced by the participants' acquired knowledge that will enable them to share their faith automatically.

Phase Four

Phase four involves skills consolidation and application. After acquiring the necessary skills, it is important to put them in a definite framework for participants. This phase imparts a definite shape and stability to their newly acquired skills. This would be evidenced by the participants' willingness and/or hopefully actual witness to someone. The ultimate goal was for the participants to take the next steps by eventually considering, discussing, and formulating an evangelism ministry.

Phase Five

Phase five is generalization and maintenance where generalization is the ability for the participant to perform a skill under different conditions (stimulus generalization), the ability to apply a skill in a different way (response generalization), and to continue to exhibit that skill over time (maintenance). Unfortunately, this phase cannot be witnessed in the time allotted for project implementation. The desired outcome is for the participants to want to continue to study how the scriptures provide insight into the

gospel message that informs evangelism as well as continuing with consistent prayer that was started during implementation.

Phase Six

Phase six is post-treatment assessment follow-up which would be continuing education.⁷

This doctoral research project is being presented from an African American perspective, primarily because the context is an African American church. However, it is believed that the research and methodology would be beneficial for all churches regardless of race, culture, or denomination.

Literature Review

Any effort to understand the African American experience and its legacy needs to include a consideration and critique of some of the forms of trauma associated within this cultural community: individual, intergenerational, and sociohistorical trauma. Because this population has a history of being discriminated against in numerous institutions and structures in the United States, the basest of items such as access to health care, social services, and even equitable education are seen as delivery systems guided by policies and practices that produce unequal outcomes and trauma. In addition, generations of African Americans have been subject to a history of marginalization in housing and employment. Thus, a recognition and understanding of the social fabric that perpetuates

⁷ D. Turk, H. Flor, S. McMahon, and M. Koltzenburg, eds., "A Cognitive-Behavioral Approach to Pain Management," *Wall and Melzacks Textbook of Pain* (London, UK: Elsevier Churchill Livingstone, 1999), 1431-1441.

oppression, disadvantage, and vulnerability is essential in working with African Americans who experience traumatic events.⁸

Due to the constant injustice and trauma inflicted among African Americans, the one place the African American family could find solace was in the church. From the very days of slavery, the church served as the source of freedom from the burdens of a life of subjugation which included beatings and watching one's family being sold on the auction block. It was in the church where plans were made and carried out as slaves escaped via the Underground Railroad or the numerous other ways used to escape the oppression of slavery. The church also served as a place where, for a few moments during the week, the African American family could find sweet peace.

After emancipation, the church became the gathering place for families to receive information and assistance for such things as employment and housing. Families gathered at the church all day on Sunday and enjoyed fellowship and meals together. African American schools and universities were birthed within the walls of the church and great care was taken that everyone looked out for one another. St. Paul United Methodist Church was planted firmly within the African American community, known as Freedman's Town and is identified as the birthplace of Huston-Tillotson University, now located in Austin, Texas. In addition to understanding the role of inequality and oppression for Black Americans, it is also important to understand the strengths of African American families and communities. The shared value of connectedness, rather

⁸ Charles R. Figley, ed. *Encyclopedia of Trauma: An Interdisciplinary Guide* (Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications, Inc., 2012), 1431-1441, <https://doi.org/10.4135/>.

than individualism—an esteemed value of American society—demonstrates a collective consciousness in the African American community.⁹

Through restructuring instituted by the Dallas County government, things began to change resulting in not one but two highways being built that ran straight through Freedman's Town, forcing many of the residents to relocate. This also created a huge impediment to employment and trade as the Dallas downtown area had only been a short walk from Freedman's Town. This story is not unique to St. Paul United Methodist Church, but it is a story told over and over across these United States, gentrification reared its ugly head.

With congregants no longer living within walking distance of the church, attendance began to wane. The one constant within the African American community, the place where one could feel safe had changed and not necessarily for the better. With desegregation came the availability of jobs and housing that were not available before. But it came at a cost. Over time, demands were made upon the employee's time and working on Sunday was one of them. Along with the ability to get better housing came the need to maintain that new housing, so landscaping and a myriad of other chores were carried out on perhaps the only day one got off during the week, which made attending church a secondary priority. Nevertheless, whatever the reason, church attendance was down. This led to fewer of the younger generations being raised in the church and soon church ceased to be a priority in the lives of the younger African American population. However, the older generation still held on to their traditions and still attended church services on Sunday but slowly became aware of the changes that had taken place.

⁹ Figley, *Encyclopedia of Trauma*, 13.

Additionally, pastors and church leaders were meeting to try to find ways to attract the people back to the church. They instituted changes to the worship program, incorporated different services at different times to appeal to a younger generation and the older generation felt left out. The African American church had long been considered a therapeutic palliative for many families. Historically, the church has been a place to counter alienation and isolation. It was a place for song, laughter, crying, and self-expression through testimonies of faith. The church was one of the few supportive locations for the extended family across generations.¹⁰ Things had changed and there was nothing they could do to stop it or make it better.

So now there was a new kind of trauma, one that does not fall within the confines of the standard definition of trauma. Trauma being defined as a sudden, potentially deadly experience, often leaving lasting, troubling memories.¹¹ This trauma is emotional, but not quite to the point of a mental breakdown. Instead, early research of trauma survivors held that social support acted as a buffer against the impact of trauma, though recent research showed that individuals' ability to accurately perceive their social support impacted the efficacy of the support system.¹² Now the very social support that helped mitigate the effects of the life of African American parishioners, was now adding to the trauma they had experienced in the past.

¹⁰ Figley, *Encyclopedia of Trauma*, 14.

¹¹ Figley, *Encyclopedia of Trauma*, 13.

¹² Courtney Wells and Texas Woman's University, "Loneliness and Trauma: A Causal Model Exploring Attachment, Loneliness, and Cognition among a Clinical and Comparison Group," *Counseling Psychology* (2015): 4.

As the older congregation experienced the loss of the way the church used to be, they were also experiencing the loss of friends and loved ones who had either moved away or passed on. The result can cause extreme loneliness. Increased loneliness has negative implications for individuals' health and well-being. Research showed that loneliness was a predictor for decreased quality sleep, elevated systolic blood pressure, increased cardiovascular disease, escalated activation in the hypothalamic pituitary adrenocortical area, and an over-expression of genes in connection with pro-inflammatory responses while simultaneously predicting an under-expression of genes in connection with anti-inflammatory properties.¹³

Loneliness also increased the risk for overall psychological distress, depression, cognitive dysfunction, psychopathology, social anxiety, suicidal ideations and action, and interpersonal communication deficits.¹⁴ Our observations indicate that this loneliness is a part of the trauma affecting many of the older generation of congregants today and can be seen in social anxiety and interpersonal communication deficits. Loneliness was shown to be both a subjective and a social phenomenon. Loneliness was differentiated from other affective experiences by the combination of disconnection, feelings of not belonging and aloneness, as well as emotional pain and inner turmoil. Individuals experienced loneliness when there was a discrepancy between their expectations for relationships and how they perceived their interpersonal connections. As a social issue, networks were examined and found that striking patterns emerged; individuals were impacted by others' experience of loneliness when they lived in close proximity. The experience of loneliness

¹³ Wells, *Loneliness and Trauma*, 1-2.

¹⁴ Wells, *Loneliness and Trauma*, 1-2.

operated as both the instigator of disconnection as well as the outcome.¹⁵ We can see that this would be a major impediment to one's evangelistic witness.

Researchers explained that loneliness was stigmatized, such that feeling isolated could progress to being ostracized. Researchers hypothesized that people rejected lonely individuals in an effort to sustain their own social networks and the quality of their relationships.¹⁶ Thus, the lonely become lonelier and withdrew to themselves making it more difficult to be enthusiastic about their future. We have provided just a few of the cognitive perspectives that have or could possibly affect the older congregation. In essence, the question in their mind would be "why would I want to be a witness to someone by inviting them to come to the church when I do not see a future for myself, how can there be a future for them?"

The congregation at St. Paul United Methodist Church had already been confronted with some of the scenarios previously described, and in March 2020, they were struck by a global pandemic that literally shut down the world. Everyone was instructed to stay in their homes to prevent the spread of this deadly disease. The one place where everyone could find solace...the church... was CLOSED. The doors were locked, and the lights were out. This congregation was home (alone) watching the news and hearing the horrifying stories of thousands of people dying from this disease with no end in sight. Just one more thing added to the list. It is a wonder that people are still holding on. But it was the strength and resiliency of a people who have endured so much

¹⁵ Wells, *Loneliness and Trauma*, 1-2.

¹⁶ Wells, *Loneliness and Trauma*, 1-2.

throughout the generations that enabled them to continue to look to the Lord and the church to bring them through.

This is where the therapeutic approaches from Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT) would be most beneficial and geared toward the promotion of realistic, accurate and balanced thinking and that the modification of thinking will, in turn, produce associated changes in mood and behavior.¹⁷ We must dismantle or unravel the cognitive distortions that have promoted a negative way of thinking, i.e., that things have changed so drastically that it can never go back to the way it was based on what the church has done and not necessarily upon what Jesus has done. The congregants have attended church and have done what they considered Godly, but perhaps were not fully committed to the gospel message and certainly not to the extent that they want to bear witness to Jesus Christ. The hypothesis of this doctoral research project, through evangelism training, is designed to turn this thinking around to the positive, by placing the focus on Jesus Christ thereby restructuring how the congregants see the situation and be led to become disciples of Jesus Christ because they now have an understanding that evangelism is the mission of the church.

Cognitive Behavior Therapy (CBT) is based on the theory that the way individuals perceive a situation is more closely connected to their reaction than the situation itself. Individuals' perceptions are often distorted and unhelpful, particularly when they are distressed. Cognitive Behavior Therapy helps people identify their

¹⁷ Richard F. Farmer and Alexander L. Chapman, "Enhancing Interpersonal Effectiveness," *Behavioral Interventions in Cognitive Behavior Therapy: Practical Guidance for Putting Theory into Action*, 2nd ed. (Washington, DC: American Psychological Association, 2016), 4, <http://dtl.idm.oclc.org/login?url=https://www.proquest.com/books/enhancing-interpersonal-effectiveness/docview/1707533305/se-2>.

distressing thoughts and evaluate how realistic the thoughts are. Then they learn to change their distorted thinking. When they think more realistically, they feel better. The emphasis is also consistently on solving problems and initiating behavioral changes. CBT is a time-sensitive, structured, present-oriented psychotherapy that has been scientifically tested and found to be effective in more than 2000 studies for the treatment of many different health and mental health conditions. When implemented correctly, CBT helps individuals get better and stay better.¹⁸ The scriptural pericope from the biblical foundations chapter demonstrates, in essence, how CBT works.

The first thing Jesus did was to start by unraveling the cognitive distortion (that He was dead) that was preventing the disciples from doing what He had spent three years teaching them to do—He presented Himself alive. And He provided many convincing proofs of that fact over a period of forty days, He guided the disciples back through the time He had spent with them and the many signs and wonders they had witnessed and they themselves had performed. Slowly, Jesus began to dismantle the cognitive distortions by making the disciples aware that their thinking and how they were seeing things was distorted. Clearly, the only true way to overcome anything negative is to face it head on. Jesus needed them to see that these negative distortions existed, and then He began to focus their attention to how they were framing things to themselves - because reality was standing right there with them.¹⁹

¹⁸ Beckinstitute.org, “Understanding CBT,” *The Beck Institute for Cognitive Behavioral Therapy*, <https://beckinstitute.org/about/understanding-cbt/>.

¹⁹ Peter Grinspoon, “How to Recognize and Tame Your Cognitive Distortions,” (blog), *Health Harvard*, May 4, 2022, <https://www.health.harvard.edu/blog/how-to-recognize-and-tame-your-cognitive-distortions-202205042738>.

Since CBT is time-sensitive, Jesus utilized a forty-day window of time to provide structured and more importantly present-oriented psychotherapy. Jesus retold the scriptures from the Old Testament to the time He was standing with the disciples to specify that all that had been foretold was relevant to their present reality. This is a weakness within the church where it is sorely lacking in the teaching of what was foretold about Jesus and the kingdom of God and making it relevant to today's reality. By simulating what Jesus did post-resurrection, the participants of this doctoral research project can also understand the present reality of Jesus Christ in their evangelistic witness.

When Jesus first appeared to the disciples after His resurrection, He found them weeping and distraught over His death. He told Mary Magdalene to go tell the other disciples that He had risen, hoping that this great news would turn their sadness to joy. Instead, the disciples doubted Him. Why? Because of their cognitive distortions. The church today is stuck in a state of hopelessness over the loss of what used to be. We must be intentional in helping the congregants dismantle those negative cognitive distortions and restructure their thinking from a place of negativity to a life of positivity. By the time of Jesus' ascension, the disciple's thinking had changed, and they had been prepared to do what Jesus had commissioned them to do. Cognitive restructuring can be seen throughout the time that Jesus was with the disciples after His resurrection.

The historical focus was on John Wesley, who was noted to be the founder of the Methodist denomination. It was imperative that the attention be upon the man and not the denomination because, like Jesus, one man had been credited with worldwide change within the religious and spiritual community. We sought to find the parallels and

variables of each man's character that would illuminate the skills and abilities they possessed that were instrumental in their ability to get others to follow them. Our findings were revealing in that neither man sought anything for themselves other than to do the will of God and glorify the Father. Neither man sought the limelight, did not require cumbersome titles, nor did they possess great wealth. However, they were great teachers and were able to eloquently express and expound their methodologies and their reasonings for why they did what they did. John Wesley's sufferings could in no way be compared to the sufferings that Jesus went through, but Wesley's sufferings were traumatic, nonetheless.²⁰ Wesley's religious consciousness was awakened after being ordained a deacon in the Church of England.²¹ Wesley and his mother had been having "heart-searching and theological" conversations when she learned of his intention to be ordained and she suggested "that he enter upon a serious examination of yourself, that you may know whether you have a reasonable hope of salvation."

Cognitive Behavioral Theory (CBT) suggests that our thoughts, emotions, body sensations, and behavior are all connected, and that whatever we think and do affects the way we feel. The measures John Wesley undertook in his life provide a discernible example of CBT. In CBT, problems are broken down into five components: situations, thoughts, emotions, physical feelings, and actions. After his discussion with his mother, Wesley began to use the CBT technique of journaling by keeping a daily diary, a practice he continued for the rest of his life.

²⁰ Wesley and Jay, *The Journal of John Wesley*, vii.

²¹ Parker, *The Journal of John Wesley*, 177.

Wesley also developed and practiced new coping skills, as noted, early entries in his journal included rules and resolutions, his scheme of study, lists of sins and shortcomings, and “general questions” as to his piety all to the end of promoting “holy living.” He began a lifelong obsession with the ordering of time, arising at four in the morning to pray, setting aside times for devotion, and eliminating “all useless employments and knowledge.”²² Many of these coping skills were given as rules for his small groups as he evangelized.

One of the key aspects of the study of John Wesley’s life is that there were no outward signs that highlighted any mental health issues. There were no breakdowns, he did not present himself in any manner as a man with cognitive issues. However, when we review what he did and even his reasoning behind what he did, we can begin to uncover the clever techniques he used to overcome his shortcomings. Wesley kept a journal of everything. Journaling enables one to remember the process, to review the answer, the feelings, even one’s fears, as well as being able to look back at how far one has come in their journey. It is plausible and feasible that one can use Cognitive Behavior Therapy approaches without a trained therapist. Realistically it should be understood that CBT was not around in Wesley’s time, but many of the techniques Wesley used for himself are used in CBT.

The perspective gained in ascertaining how this theory interacted with the problem this doctoral research project denotes illuminates that this project was not designed to reveal some terrible truth or some out of control mental issue, rather the

²² New World Encyclopedia, s.v. “John Wesley,” https://www.newworldencyclopedia.org/p/index.php?title=John_Wesley&oldid=1075251.

project was designed to speak to the deep-seated thinking born of life's experiences that may have become a hindrance. But issues which certainly can be rectified and resolved once exposed and treated. John Wesley provide an excellent example of how the CBT techniques work.

After extensive research, it became clear that evangelical theology was the theological discipline that best informed this doctoral research project, as it provided greater clarity into the full message of the Bible and how the person of Jesus Christ is entwined within its pages from Genesis to Revelation. As followers of Jesus Christ, our biblical perspective is that of Christianity. The current political and religious climate that we are living in has succeeded only in propelling a great deal of hyperbole about Christianity. Those who are instrumental in propelling this agenda, are so far removed from Christianity there is no reflection of God's love in their thoughts and actions. So much change in so short a time frame, so much trauma and destruction that it is easy to fathom why one would not want to be proactive in sharing a faith that has been so distorted and misinformed that it has resulted in more death than life. Clearly making evangelism an even more impossible task.

As Owen C. Thomas stated in his book *Introduction to Theology*, the church has a mission to speak about God to the world. A Christian cannot speak about the Father (God) and not speak about the Son, (Jesus Christ), nor can they speak about the Son, and not speak about the Father. The function and task of theology is to test, criticize, and revise the language that the church uses about God, to test it by its norm – namely, God's self-disclosure, to which the Bible gives testimony. This testing is necessary, because the church's language about God is fallible and can fall into error and confusion. This testing

is possible, because God has promised that the Holy Spirit will preserve and lead the church into all truth. All Christians express their faith in word, deed, and manner of life.²³

Hence, the ethos of this project was to put forth that which Larry Hart writes about, teaching the Bible and relating it to contemporary questions, issues, and knowledge. Just as Jesus did for the disciples when He related His story from creation until the moment that He was standing with them prior to His ascension. The challenge was that teaching of this type had not been done for a very long time. Not only were we dealing with a people having difficulty with the changes in their church, the loss of what was and the loss of life due to the pandemic but a people lacking in the full knowledge of Jesus Christ. They could not see or believe beyond their grief. There was a fear of the unknown and their lack of knowledge was a cause for concern. In their past, someone was always there to tell them through word or song that everything was going to be alright, but now they are not so sure because they do not hear the message the same way they had in the past. Theology is a reflection on what we believe and on how it shapes our lives.²⁴ Which is how evangelism is promoted and shared through and by us.

Using the Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT) approach provided the ability to help them understand their experience of the world, assisted them in making the necessary cognitive changes to become confident of their Christian witness and thus be able to tell others about their faith. The goal of this research project was to immerse the participants in the knowledge of Jesus. Teaching them to learn of Jesus by association and not by repetition. This doctoral research project would give them an experience of

²³ Thomas and Wondra, *Introduction to Theology*, 1.

²⁴ Thomas and Wondra, *Introduction to Theology*, 2.

Jesus Christ through the Holy Spirit to move them beyond the uncertainty faced today to the surety of a future in Christ Jesus.

Conclusion

Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT) treatment plans are based on an ever-evolving cognitive conceptualization, which means it can be adjusted for the individual and/or the situation. The cognitive model proposes that dysfunctional thinking is common to all psychological disturbances but is not limited to mental health issues. Thereby the correct correlation would be that it is a thinking disorder. CBT is culturally adaptable, and treatment can be tailored to the individual. Which would be extremely beneficial in administering the doctoral research project, as well as building up the participants' ability to think positively through their evangelistic witness. Again, the focus of this doctoral research project is from an African American perspective, however, the current political and religious climate makes this theoretical approach adaptable for families and churches that are dealing with division within their homes and churches based on political affiliation or a myriad of other things.

CBT emphasizes the positive, this will promote the teaching as a good thing and not as a cumbersome chore. Positive CBT focuses on positive emotions by using questions related to hope, success, strengths, and competencies. Fredrickson's broaden-and-build theory suggests that positive emotions allow individuals to broaden their awareness of their beliefs and behaviors.²⁵ In a world of negativity, positivity is the

²⁵ PositivePsychology.com, "What Is Positive CBT? Positive Psychology in Therapy," <https://positivepsychology.com/positive-cbt/#:~:text=Positive%20CBT%20focuses%20on%20positiveof%20their%20beliefs%20and%20behaviors.>

message accomplished through evangelism. CBT stresses collaboration and active participation, which was emphasized as participants were gathered for the doctoral research project. The participants were asked to commit to studying at home for them to achieve the best benefits. CBT is aspirational by promoting an ambition, goal, or any kind of desired end that might be achieved through personal effort. CBT is values based so that everyone is to be treated with dignity and understanding in every encounter. CBT is goal oriented with the focus allowing the participants to reflect on the way that they process information and teaches participants to respond to their dysfunctional cognitions.

The techniques of Cognitive Behavior Therapy are many and are highly adaptable. Once this interdisciplinary theory was determined to be the most appropriate for this Doctor of Ministry research project, it was quite easy to find varying techniques to be applied and incorporated. It was surprising to determine that many of these techniques have been employed throughout the years in teaching, studying, and meditating on the word of God.

CHAPTER SIX

PROJECT ANALYSIS

Introduction

The purpose of this doctoral research project was to develop a training model for evangelism at St. Paul United Methodist Church. Membership had been in decline for several years and there was no evangelistic witness, no evangelism training in place and no plans to do so. This introduction identifies the purpose of this chapter and how each of the foundational chapters were instrumental in preparing and implementing the doctoral research project. The second section details the methodology and implementation of the research project and the summary of learning which resulted from the implementation of the project. The final section is a summary of the chapter and identifies some potential next steps regarding evangelism training at St. Paul United Methodist Church.

The hypothesis for this project contended that if the participants received eight weeks of study on evangelism their understanding about the mission of the church and their respective roles would increase. The training was taught in person at the church and consisted of eight bible study classes. The first class was to have the participants complete the pre-project survey and serve as an introduction to the project and its purpose to teach them about evangelism. The consensus was that most of the participants had some idea of what evangelism was supposed to be but were very unclear as to its purpose. There were a couple participants who had no idea of what evangelism was. The

last class was for the participants to complete a post-project survey and discuss what they would like to see as the next steps. The biblical, historical, theological and interdisciplinary foundational chapters were utilized to provide the support for this doctoral research project designed to educate the participants about the gospel message and through that knowledge achieve a greater understanding that evangelism is the mission of the church.

The passage of scripture for this Doctor of Ministry project, “Developing a Training Model of Evangelism at St. Paul United Methodist Church, Dallas, Texas,” examined in the biblical foundation chapter provided an outline of the lessons that Jesus reiterated to the disciples during the forty days after His resurrection in preparation for the evangelistic mission He had given them the authority to execute. During those forty days He expounded upon the backstory of who He was and why He came. He made sure the disciples understood that this mission was to be accomplished with the help of the Holy Spirit, which would guide them in all ways and truth. Therefore, they would not have to rely on their memories alone to accomplish the mission. With these elements addressed, the participants would have an unobstructed vision of the origins of the church and what their responsibility entailed to carry out the mission of the church. Dr. Tolly A.

Kennon, III states in his book, *The Jesus Model of Leadership*:

Here comes Jesus with His radical notion that the kingdom of God was unlike any kingdom the Hebrews had ever seen or experienced. Instead of existing in accordance with human knowledge and design, Jesus taught that God’s kingdom existed within each of them. It was based upon the relationship that the Hebrews each shared with the Lord God Almighty. And if the average Jew wanted to really get to know God the Father and become connected to Him, all that individual had to do was to look no further than within him or her. What was so radical about

Jesus' teachings was that they ran counter to the common Jewish understanding of the kingdom of God.¹

It was relevant that the teachings of another radical person, a radical disciple maker in the person of John Wesley be selected as the subject of the historical foundations chapter. John Wesley was an English cleric, theologian, and evangelist whose "Holy Club" derisively called "the Methodists" propelled him to become one of the greatest leaders of the revival movement within the Church of England and a pivotal leader of an evangelical movement which led to the establishment of the Methodist Church. Wesley was convinced that it was important for him personally to spread the gospel through relationships and continue to grow closer to God in those relationships. Wesley was zealous and people were not used to his level of religious fervor. His fiery preaching and enthusiasm led to his banishment from pulpits within the Church of England. It was through his friend George Whitefield that he began his evangelistic mission of preaching in the fields, moving from place to place spreading the gospel message.

The four main principles of evangelical theology were found to be the most relevant theological foundation for this doctoral research project. These principles were identified as: the Bible as the word of God, the atoning work of Christ on the cross, His death and resurrection, the experience of the Holy Spirit in conversion and ongoing transformation and its emphasis on the mission of proclaiming the good news about Jesus to all the world. These principles are essential to evangelism and the gospel message. Theology is basic to Christian discipleship and is the culminating discipline which leads

¹ Kennon, III, Tolly A., *The Jesus Model of Leadership: Volume One: Prayer's Essential Connection to Effective Spiritual Leadership* (Winston-Salem, NC: Smack Publishing, 2023), 99.

to worldview formation. Hence, evangelical theology as a systematic theology, provided clarification and unity to the diverse body of biblical materials contending that the gospel is the core of our faith. Theology is the study of the triune God and in essence “evangelical theology is oriented around the personal—personal faith, personal conversion, personal experience, and personal mission.²”

The interdisciplinary foundation chapter delineated how multiple disciplines could be synthesized through Cognitive Behavioral Theory (CBT). CBT is rooted in the fundamental principle that an individual’s cognitions play a significant role in the development and maintenance of emotional and behavioral responses to life situations. In CBT models cognitive processes, in the form of meanings, judgments, appraisals, and assumptions associated with specific life events, are the primary determinants of one’s feelings and actions and can either facilitate or hinder the process of adaptation. CBT treatment plans are based on an ever-evolving cognitive conceptualization, which means it can be adjusted for the individual and/or the situation and it is culturally adaptable. This enabled the research project to be applicable to everyone without having to write a specific lesson plan for each participant.

The positive emphasis of CBT promotes the learning process as a good thing and not a cumbersome chore. CBT maintained a focus on positive emotions by utilizing questions related to hope, success, strength, and competency. CBT stresses collaboration and active participation and provides a safe environment for the participants to speak

² Uche Anizor, Robert B. Price, and Hank Voss, *Doing Theology: Evangelical Theology* (London, UK: T&T Clark, 2021), 3, <http://dx.doi.org/10.5040/9780567677167-007>.

freely. CBT is purposeful and enables the participants to build solutions rather than solve concerns.

This chapter will provide an analysis of the Doctor of Ministry research project, “Developing a Training Model for Evangelism at St. Paul United Methodist Church, Dallas, Texas.” Enlisting an interpretivist perspective in the design and implementation of this doctoral research project enabled the researcher to examine the participants of this project via questioning and observation. This was valuable because interpretivism argues that truth and knowledge are subjective, as well as culturally and historically situated, and based on people’s experiences and their understanding of them. Foremost in the implementation of this project was the fact that human knowledge is contextual and rooted in language.

Methodology

The project began with the hypothesis to teach the participants about the gospel message during an eight-week course that would increase their knowledge and understanding about evangelism and thereby assimilate that knowledge into their personal witness. This would enable the participants to gain an understanding that evangelism is the mission of the church, and it is accomplished via each believer through the sharing of their personal story of how their faith in Christ changed them and their lives. The participants were selected through interviews with the researcher. There were no pre-project requirements other than a willingness to learn about evangelism. Participants were informed that this was a human research study, and their identities would remain anonymous. Each participant was given the Informed Consent form and

given at least two weeks to read it, sign it and return it prior to the start of the research project. The training consisted of eight consecutive bible study classes which were held in person at St. Paul United Methodist Church for one hour on Sunday mornings prior to worship. The venue was a conference room which offered a cozy, quiet atmosphere and provided a safe place for the participants to ask questions without interruptions.

The selected approach was to utilize Jesus' post resurrection teachings to the disciples as the content-based syllabus for this research project. The verses in Acts chapter one verses one through eight provided an excellent guide into how Jesus prepared the disciples to evangelize after His ascension. There were six lessons to be taught over six weeks that contained the evangelical training, but two additional weeks were added to give the participants ample time to complete the pre and post project surveys.

Week One

In this class participants were given the pre-project survey to complete. Once the surveys were completed discussion began about evangelism with the purpose of ascertaining how much knowledge the participants possessed about evangelism as outlined in Phase One of Cognitive Behavioral Theory.

Week Two

Prayer is a vital component of any evangelistic ministry and this research project, so the lesson for week two was Prayer and the Holy Spirit. Each participant was given a prayer posture that would help them to seek and gain an understanding of the scriptures and the lessons. The prayer posture called *lectio divina* is from Rev. Juanita Rasmus's

book *Learning to Be*.³ This prayer posture is wonderful because of the deep breathing that allows one to make conscious contact with God as the breath of life present in your awareness. The desire was for the participants to understand the necessity and importance of prayer because prayer gives us understanding (Prov. 4:7), prayer prepares us (Mk. 1:35), prayer strengthens us (Matt. 26:36) and it is in prayer that the Lord speaks to us (Lk. 6:12). Additionally, it is the Holy Spirit that leads and guides us and as we will see later the Holy Spirit is important in spreading the gospel message. But it is through prayer that one receives the Holy Spirit and so we also incorporated Acts 1:13-14 where the disciples and the women went into the Upper Room and prayed and Acts 2:1-4 where the Holy Spirit came upon them as cloven tongues of fire and they began to speak with other tongues.

Week Three

An extensive analysis of Acts chapter one verse three that Jesus “presented Himself alive, after His suffering, by many convincing proofs,” led to the axiom of this lesson titled, “Let Us Begin at the Beginning.” From Luke 24 when Jesus appeared to the two disciples on the road to Emmaus and again when he appeared to the disciples and ate fish with them, Jesus spoke to them of all that had been written about Him in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms. This lesson was written to provide proof that Jesus was a part of the biblical story from creation. The YouTube video: iBible Chapter1: Creation [Revelation Media] was shown to provide a visual as well as audio impact of the creation story. With the onus upon Genesis chapter one verse twenty-six when God said,

³ Juanita Campbell Rasmus, *Learning to Be* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2020) 48-49.

“Let Us make man in Our image....” And John 1:1-10 which speaks of Jesus as the Word, who came and dwelt among us. “He was in the world, and the world was made through Him, and the world did not receive Him.” It was imperative that the participants understand that Jesus did not just appear as an interesting story for a virgin birth, but it was God’s plan and purpose for Jesus to come to earth from the fall of Adam and Eve in the garden to reconcile man back to God. This is the essence of evangelism.

Week Four

This lesson was again based upon Jesus’ time with the two disciples on the road to Emmaus and the other disciples as they dined together. This lesson was titled, “Jesus Christ: God and Man.” The focus scriptures were Isaiah 7:14, 9:6-7 which foretold of the coming Messiah to be born of a virgin to establish His kingdom and uphold it with justice and righteousness. God had promised in Isaiah 42:1 that He would send a servant to His people. We wanted to reinforce that God did not send Jesus as a celebrity with power, prestige, and wealth because man becomes enamored by the things of this world and misses the message. We taught that Jesus exercised justice and righteousness without cost, and this is what angered the church officials because He was causing them to lose money. Participants were also provided with a list, in their manuals, of the miracles and healings performed by Jesus Christ in the scriptures which would be helpful to refer to while evangelizing.

Week Five

Again, focusing on Acts 1:3, “to these He presented Himself alive, after His suffering....,” the true evangelistic message of the cross. This lesson was titled, “Obedient Servant/Suffering Messiah” and video clips were shown from “The Passion of the Christ” which depicted Jesus being whipped and carrying His cross up Golgotha’s Hill. The song, “Were You There When They Crucified My Lord” by Rev. C. L. Moore was also played to provide a complete immersion into the suffering that Jesus went through for us.

Week Six

“Death Could Not Hold Him!” was the title of this lesson and dealt with His resurrection. It was important that the participants believe and understand that Jesus Christ is alive and sits at the right hand of the Father. There can be no evangelistic witness of Jesus Christ if one does not believe that He lives. A list with each of Jesus’ resurrection appearances was also included in the training manual.

Week Seven

This lesson expounded upon Acts 1:8 where Jesus tells the disciples that they will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon them to be His witnesses. Reference was made to Matthew 10 when Jesus sent the disciples out to the Jews, but they rejected Jesus, and now the disciples were being sent to the Gentiles, which includes all of us. It is in Matthew 28:16-20 that we find this mission being given specifically to the disciples and the church. The lesson was appropriately entitled “The Great Commission.”

Week Eight

The culmination of this research project was to collect the participant's journals and have them complete the post-project survey. Then the participants were asked several exit interview questions and what they felt should be the next steps regarding the teaching and studying of evangelism.

Implementation

Session One

This initial class opened with prayer. I introduced myself and explained the purpose of these classes. I reiterated that this was a human research study being administered as my research project for my doctoral dissertation. I expressed that the desired results of this project would be instrumental in enabling me to create a training program on evangelism to be published and used in other churches. The participants were asked to introduce themselves as an icebreaker. The project began with eight participants, two men and six women varying in age from mid-twenties to late seventies. Participant backgrounds varied from doctor, lawyer, teacher, clergy, regular employee, and retirees. Spiritual experience also varied from not being raised in the church to having been in church all their lives, with one participant currently attending seminary. This combination promised to provide an interesting and enlightening eight weeks. My context associates were invited to be a part of the classes to assist and provide feedback. Five were in attendance for this initial class. All lessons were taught by me from the training manual I had compiled entitled "*Let's Talk About the Gospel Message*" (Appendix E).

Each participant was given the pre-project survey to complete. The participants were each given a training manual and a journal. Discussion began by asking the following questions:

1. Can you describe evangelism (in your own words)?
2. Can you define what it means to be a disciple?

One of the participants stated that when they hear the word evangelism, they think of the people from another denomination that come knocking on your door every weekend. All participants had heard of the word evangelism and while there were two participants who stated they did not know what evangelism was, the majority of the participant answers to question one was similar in that they had known or been made aware that evangelism consisted of going door to door to “sell” the gospel to unbelievers. About half of the participants stated they did not like the word and could another word be used to describe sharing the gospel. Incorporated into the training manual was a description of evangelism as follows:

Evangelism is taken from the Greek word *euaggelizo* which is defined: to announce good news (evangelize) especially the gospel. Many associate evangelizing with the preaching of the Bible, but it is really our personal witness of our experience with the Lord. You see many people we encounter may never come inside of a church to hear a preacher preach, but they see and/or know you, and your life is the witness that they need to see of how God has changed your life. Sharing your testimony is the greatest attestation of Jesus Christ.

Evangelism is the mission of the church which Jesus handed down to the disciples just prior to His ascension in Matthew 28:18-20:

And Jesus came up and spoke to them saying, “All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.” (NASV)

One of the participants was really struggling with whether evangelism was what every believer is supposed to do or whether it is a calling. The other participants each offered their belief of what evangelism means to that one participant. We all assured this participant that every believer of Jesus Christ is to share the gospel message, while there are some Christians called to be evangelists according to Ephesians 4:11. Immediately there was a collaboration and a rapport among the participants that was the beginning of lively discussions and a sincere desire for everyone to gain understanding. One of the participants stated that:

This lesson made the idea of evangelizing more concrete and attainable. Even desirable because it made it feel real. My previous ideas on evangelizing included this traditional image of standing on street corners, passing out pamphlets pressuring strangers and passersby to stop, listen and make a change. I know that even for someone who was raised in the church, like I was, I wouldn't even stop. I'd feel judged and attacked. However, after this lesson – after seeing this experience as an open and authentic engagement/conversation that presents an opportunity for me to share an experience with someone else – the idea of evangelizing is exciting.

Each participant stated that the answer to question two was that a disciple is a follower of Jesus Christ. The journal prompts for week one:

- Did this lesson help you to understand what it means to be a disciple?
- Can you take what you read from this scripture and apply it to modern times?
- Would you feel comfortable explaining this scripture to someone else?

Session Two

The class session was opened with prayer. This lesson was titled, “Prayer and the Holy Spirit.” With Acts 1:8 as the subject from this content-based syllabus, it was imperative that it become the first lesson in this project. Luke states Jesus told the disciples, “But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you shall be My witnesses...” The hook for this lesson was the scenario of the disciples in

the Upper Room praying for the promise that Jesus had spoken of when the events of that day took place.

Imagine being in an Upper Room praying for the promise that Jesus had spoken of. You have no idea what to expect, but you wait. And suddenly there comes a strong, violent, rushing wind (sounding like a tornado) that fills the room you are in. The next thing you know these little flames land on you.

And the question was posed, “I would be afraid, wouldn’t you? The participants all responded that they would. As we read the lesson, the emphasis was upon the infilling of the Holy Spirit. It was necessary to explain that the events described in Acts 2:1-4 were done in that specific manner to provide the most impact and let those witnessing the event note that something miraculous truly had occurred. It was pointed out that the disciples spoke in another language, not an unknown tongue, rather it was not their native language, so that those around would realize that this was a supernatural event. The fundamental point being made was that this is not the only way to receive the Holy Spirit. I explained that God can use numerous and varied ways to show Himself mighty and that we should not place limitations upon the way God operates. Several participants relayed that this discussion caused them to think more about the Holy Spirit.

The essential element to this baptism of the Holy Spirit was prayer. The disciples were in prayer for approximately ten days (Jesus appeared to them over forty days) and Pentecost occurs fifty days after Jesus was crucified. There was a lively discussion about prayer. It is to be noted that the younger participants stated that they know prayer is important, but there must be more to it than that. While the other participants varying in age from the 30s to 70s stressed that prayer must include reading, studying, and meditating upon the word of God. The lesson stated that prayer does four things:

- Prayer gives us understanding (Proverbs 4:7)

- Prayer prepares us (Mark 1:35)
- Prayer strengthens us (Matthew 26:36), and
- It is in prayer that the Lord speaks to us (Luke 6:12)

The participants were then advised that a great deal of information will be disseminated during this study and one hour, once a week does not provide ample time for them to gain a great understanding, so they were being asked to study the lesson at home and pray for understanding. I provided a prayer posture called *lectio divina* which I obtained from Reverend Juanita Rasmus' book, "*Learning to Be*,"⁴ explaining that this posture would enable them to focus upon the scripture(s) and ask the Holy Spirit for guidance. The reason for placing this lesson at the beginning versus at the end of the lessons (based upon Acts 1:8) was so the participants would understand the importance of prayer during this project and in evangelism.

Prayer (*lectio divina*)

It is important that you pray every day during this project. At least 15 minutes per day and record the time and the length of your prayer time. Prayer accomplishes these things:

Prayer gives us understanding (Proverbs 4:7)
 Prayer prepares us (Matthew 26:36) (Mark 1:35)
 Prayer strengthens us (Matthew 14:23)
 In prayer the Lord speaks to us (Luke 6:12)

For each lesson pray about the verses (suggest only 5 to 7 to focus on at any singular sitting. Have a pad and pen to take notes.

- Take a moment and breathe. When inhaling, be aware of the cool air coming into your nostrils, and likewise the warm air that exits them when exhaling. Just be with your breath. Do this for a couple of minutes. This is the first step for preparing to be present to *lectio divina*, making conscious contact with God as the breath of life present in your awareness.

⁴ Rasmus, *Learning to Be*, 48-49.

- *Silencio* – Quiet yourself and offer yourself to God. I find the breathing helps with this.
- *Lectio* – Read your passage slowly out loud and listen to what is being read. Listen as though God is speaking to you. Notice what word or phrase seems to catch your attention. Sit with that word or phrase and marinate in it as a gift from God to you.
- *Meditatio* – Read the passage aloud a second time. How is your word or phrase speaking into your current life? Reflect. Allow yourself to enter into the scene of the reading using your imagination. What are you hearing, seeing, smelling in the scene? Observe with the curiosity of a child.
- *Oratio* – Read the passage aloud a third time. Respond. How might God be speaking to you from this reading? This is the space to ask God, “What are you saying to me?” This is the space of conversation with God, the space of prayer. Stay open to insight – how are you being offered guidance or new awareness? How might you respond to God’s invitation flowing out of your dialogue together? Know God’s love in this space. Feel free to jot down your thoughts.
- *Contemplatio* – Contemplatio is the deep marinating, sitting with what you have heard and felt. Stay here; linger in your experience. Rest. Breathe in deeply and slowly, exhale deeply and fully. Capture what you have known here and carry it throughout your day. Bring it back to mind as you move through your day. Stay in this space with God for as long as you feel it is good and right for you.
- *Actio* – How has your experience invited you to be present to yourself or to be present to others? What action, if any, are you invited into out of this space of being with God?

The conversation then turned to the speaking of tongues, with the participants stating that they believe there must be an interpretation of tongues any time tongues are spoken. I explained that for some Christians speaking in tongues is their prayer language to God. Just because the person next to them speaks in tongues softly to themselves does not mean that there should be an interpretation, that scenario is only required if it is spoken to an audience or to the entire congregation. Journal prompts for week two:

- Record whatever the participant received during prayer, both questions, and insight.
- Can you take what you read from this scripture and apply it to modern times?
- Would you feel comfortable explaining this scripture to someone else?

I love how one of the participants summed it up nicely, “I didn’t hear the wind or speak in tongues, but I believe I received the Holy Spirit.”

Session Three

This class session opened with prayer and the playing of the YouTube video: iBible Chapter 1: Creation [Revelation Media] and the title of this lesson was “Let Us Begin at the Beginning.” Based on Jesus’ encounter with the two disciples on the road to Emmaus “and beginning with Moses and with all the prophets, He explained to them the things concerning Himself in all the Scriptures.” (Luke 24:27) I wanted the participants to understand that for them to be able to know and understand the gospel story and to have a greater understanding as they evangelize then it needed to be clear that Jesus has been around since creation. Our lesson focused on John 1:1-14 when John states that “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. All things came into being by Him, and apart from Him nothing came into being that has come into being...” It was interesting to note how quickly the conversation moved from creation to who Jesus was and how He fit in. One of the participants who was not raised in the church asked if Jesus was a different “person” from God. The discussion was lively as the other participants, and I sought to explain the trinity to this participant. I wanted to note three different perspectives on this lesson to show how varied the response is based on each participant’s spiritual experience. One of the participants stated, “this is probably the most challenging of the lessons and the one that I have the most trouble applying to today or explaining to someone else. God is one in essence, but three in person. To me, the importance of this lesson is that God, Jesus, and the Holy Spirit have always existed from the beginning – so that we know that Jesus is God and not just another good rabbi.”

Another participant stated, "...it is difficult to articulate briefly. The trinity, our main topic, is eternal. Our challenge is to be able to explain the personage of Christ for the purpose of evangelism. We made progress on that front. This is a huge subject." And still another stated, "I have never heard the creation story explained/discussed like it had been today I knew the story; questioned the story, retold the story, even sang the story. But never have I thought so much about the trinity that existed in the story. Although I noticed that God was speaking to "someone" else, I never unpacked it until today. It was quite clarifying – especially making connections to the idea that Jesus was a part of the creation and existed long before taking form in Mary. I can't say that I could explain that part to someone else, but I can better and more willingly listen to more explanation and learn about it. Journal prompts for week three:

- Pray for understanding and record any revelations and/or insights.
- Can you take what you read from this scripture and apply it to modern times?
- Would you feel comfortable explaining this scripture to someone else?

Session Four

This class session opened with prayer. Jesus during His forty days with the disciples' post resurrection continually referred to what the scriptures had spoken concerning Him. This lesson titled, "Jesus Christ: God and Man" reflected upon what the prophet Isaiah had written about Him. We focused on Isaiah 42:1, "Behold, My Servant, whom I uphold; My chosen one in whom My soul delights, I have put My Spirit upon Him; He will bring forth justice to the nations." Discussion centered around the healings and miracles that Jesus had performed as He called His disciples to Him. Jesus did not

wait for a formal send off, but from the day that He started His earthly ministry He began performing miracles and righting wrongs.

The different viewpoints extracted from this lesson by the participants were thought provoking. One participant focused on Jesus' suffering and why does it not exempt us from suffering. Another participant wanted more advanced study on the dual nature of Christ but did understand that the lesson was more about reflecting upon any miracle or healing that had occurred in their life which could become a point of witness. The one participant struggling with whether evangelism was something every believer is supposed to do, or a specific calling interjected that question into the discussion again. This caused some of the participants to question the difference between evangelism and evangelize. The most amazing utterance was when one of the participants stated, "I think evangelism is how I live my life and to evangelize is a sales technique." I am in awe as to how they feel that these are two different things. I do see it as a reflection upon how other people specifically those we will witness to, view and/or understand this. The question provided a great segway into the purpose of this research project and the anticipated outcome.

The journal prompts for week four:

- Examine their lives and remember a miracle that had been performed for them or a situation that they could not possibly have accomplished on their own.
- Can you take what you read from this scripture and apply it to modern times?
- Would you feel comfortable explaining this scripture to someone else?

Session Five

This lesson, "Obedient Servant/Suffering Messiah" was designed to fully immerse the participants into the events leading up to and including the crucifixion. This lesson

began with prayer and playing the song, “Were You There When They Crucified My Lord,” by Rev. C. L. Moore. The lesson focused on Jesus as He was with the disciples at the Last Supper and as He prayed in the Garden of Gethsemane. We discussed how Jesus prophesied in Matthew 26:31 that everyone would turn away from Him, and they did. As well as discussing how neither Caiaphas nor Pilate pronounced judgement upon Jesus, but it was the people who shouted, “crucify Him.” It was an epiphany and an aha moment for the participants to understand that they may have been just as complicit in Jesus’ crucifixion as those present on that day.

Responses reflected the impact the song and the videos had upon the participants. “God had to show us that His perfect Son was a victim of the corrupted world that we inherited from Adam,” stated one participant. Another, “the brutality of men and women! I would not like to think I would have been part of the crowd that called for crucifixion – but the truth is I was there!” Yet another,

I have read and heard the story of the crucifixion over and over again. But just like scripture, as I change and grow, so does my understanding and reading of the word. What resonated with me during this lesson was the extent to which the people – us – put Jesus on the cross. I always looked at it just as Jesus dying for my sins even though I threw the stone and put the nails in His hands, of course not literally. But thinking of evangelism – what an even bigger blessing to have the opportunity to speak of God’s grace and mercy.

Still one more stated, “I feel very comfortable explaining this to someone else. The teacher’s passion brought this lesson to life and dealt well with participant questions very well.” The journal prompts for week five:

- Consider as you read all the things you have done in your life that were worthy of punishment so much more severe than what Jesus endured.
- Can you take what you read from this scripture and apply it to modern times?
- Would you feel comfortable explaining this scripture to someone else?

Session Six

“Death Could Not Hold Him” was the title of this lesson, opening with prayer we discussed the women and disciples’ reactions as they found Jesus’ tomb empty, not understanding that He had risen just as He had told them He would do. We discussed the familiar verses that are always read on Resurrection Sunday, but we also discussed how David foretold of Jesus’ resurrection in Psalm 16:10. “For Thou wilt not abandon my soul to Sheol; neither wilt Thou allow Thy Holy One to undergo decay.” We also noted that Peter referenced this verse of scripture in his first sermon on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2:24-31). Discussion also centered around the fact that in God’s plan of salvation Jesus had already proven that a person could be raised from the dead (thereby proving Jesus’ deity) by looking at Luke 7:11-17 which tells the story of the widow of Nain’s son; Luke 8:40-56 the story of Jairus’ daughter and John 11:17-44 the story of Lazarus. I love this reaction from one of the most skeptical of participants, “I never really understood why “death could not hold Him” is a thing. I know He came back. I know it was essential that He came back. But what this means for modern times? Maybe I’m a bad Christian but I still struggle with that. I know it means to me that He is always here. Hmm. Maybe I haven’t been thinking big enough. Maybe He came back for me, my husband and Dad. Ok, that makes sense. Glad I went through this exercise. Would I feel comfortable explaining to someone else? Yes, I think I would.” Journal prompts for week six:

- Focus on the resurrection and the fact that Jesus is alive sitting at the right hand of the Father interceding for us. More importantly we can be His witnesses because we know that He lives.
- Can you take what you read from this scripture and apply it to modern times?
- Would you feel comfortable explaining this scripture to someone else?

Session Seven

This lesson opened with prayer and the hook: “I swear to tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, so help me God!” The teacher asked the participant who is an attorney, whether it was true that eyewitness testimony was considered unreliable. The attorney stated that it is true, primarily because people see only what they want to see or see only what is important to them. Amazing, that so many people can see the same thing and remember things so differently. Honestly, that helps to explain why the gospels are so different in their histories of Jesus. Thankfully, the witness that Jesus wants us to testify too does not require detailed description nor verbatim recitation of all that He said, but that we tell the story of how His coming was prophesied in the Old Testament, how He came in the form of God and man and told of the coming kingdom of God, how He was betrayed, beaten, crucified, buried and then resurrected that we may obtain salvation. This He did in the verses of scripture in Matthew 28:16-20 which are known as “The Great Commission,” which is the title of this lesson. This is the mandate to the church at large, the church that are His disciples.

Participant responses: “I’ve re-thought the verb “make” in “make disciples.” I always thought I was failing at this because “make” is an action verb. Exactly how many disciples did I “make?” Zero. But if I think about making disciples as me being part of what God does, that changes things and feels more real. I thought of “making disciples” as a task. Did I accomplish it? How many times? When I write my year-end performance review, did I get an “exceeds expectations” rating? Numbers, baby! But that’s not it at all. This class helped me understand that.” Another participant, “I remember on the first survey that this was one of the questions I could not answer. I didn’t realize such a

strong/intimidating phrase was actually something very “simple.” Do the work. Continue the work. This is evangelism to me (in a nutshell). Every day we have the opportunity to live a life like Jesus, to interact with people in love, kindness, and empathy, and to pray and stay in communication with God. That’s it. Again, in a nutshell that’s evangelism.

That is what we are called to do.” Very enlightening words from this participant:

The Great Commission means many things to many people. One thing to the televangelist, another to the men that I saw standing with signs with Bible verses on the corner the other day. Another thing to those who enter the ministry and something different to laity. The one thing that I keep top of mind when I pray is what am I doing to advance the kingdom? We can spend much time talking about the Scriptures, much time reading the latest Max Lucado book, much time in church committee meetings that are not always about the kingdom but focus on what is happening inside the church’s four walls instead of what is happening outside our walls. My concern is that too many so-called Christians are living by the bumper sticker that says: “Jesus is Returning – Look Busy!” instead of doing God’s work and being that living sacrifice that we talk about. I have used my prayer and meditation time to re-evaluate how I am spending my remaining time on this side, and I appreciate the opportunity to share with you my closing thoughts. I sometimes wonder if I have taken the easy way out. I could no longer give my time, talents, and treasures to a church that prioritized comfort over conviction. To a church that never, “said their names.” To a church that could not utter the words “Black Lives Matter.” Should I have stayed to try to evangelize to my MAGA infected white brothers and sisters? Attending St. Paul is even more of a blessing than I could ever have imagined, because I am in the company of people who truly care about the least of these. It’s not just lip service or writing a check to The United Way. And every time I set foot in our sanctuary, I think back to all of the congregants who have come before, those that began our church 150 years ago, and all of the struggles that they had to endure, and all of the struggles that are still being endured to this day, and I remember that the last will be first. I can only be an example to those who are still at my old church, showing them my joy in being in full fellowship with my beloved St. Paul brothers and sisters in Christ.

Such a powerful testimony. Journal prompts for week seven:

- Meditate on this lesson and become knowledgeable about what Jesus commissioned us to do.
- Can you take what you read from this scripture and apply it to modern times?
- Would you feel comfortable explaining this scripture to someone else?

Session Eight

For this final class session, we opened with prayer and the post-project surveys were given to the participants for them to complete. Once the surveys were completed and turned in, the participant's journals were collected. Discussion then began about what the participants believe the next steps should be. Only one participant felt that they would be able to teach about evangelism, hesitantly, but would prefer some additional teachings. Most of the participants stated they wanted more. More lessons and more in-depth study on some of the areas and questions brought up during the project. One of the participants gave this testimony:

I have a friend that was raised in a different denomination and based on her childhood experiences she did not believe in Jesus Christ. She did believe in God, but not Jesus. We were friends and while I had a great religious experience growing up, I chose not to make our relationship about her belief in Jesus. So, a couple of nights ago, we were together, and I cannot say what caused the conversation to turn to a discussion about Jesus, but I began to share using what I have learned in this class to talk about the positive experiences that I have had in my life because of Jesus and she was receptive. That was the first time she actually listened to what I had to say. I think it was because I did not come at her in a pushy manner. I just want to thank you for what I have learned, and I will continue to share my testimony with others.

Summary of Learnings

The hypothesis for this research project was if the participants received eight weeks of training about evangelism, then they would gain valuable knowledge and it would prompt their self-awareness that evangelism is the mission of the church. The project started with eight participants taking the pre-project survey and ended with six taking the post-project survey with one participant out due to surgery and one participant just stopped attending. The pre-project survey consisted of five questions and the results were as follows:

Question #1: What is the gospel message?

- Six participants responded that it was about Jesus, His death, burial, and resurrection.
- One participant responded: love God, love your neighbor as yourself, and
- One responded that it is the contents of the Nicene Creed and alternatively the contents of the Sermon on the Mount.

Question #2: Who is Jesus Christ and what happened to Him?

- Seven responded that Jesus is the Son of God of which four participants spoke of His sacrifice.
- One stated that He was part of the Trinity as defined by the Nicene Creed and Chalcedon Creed, and
- One stated He came to deliver the world from sin and death.

Question #3: What is The Great Commission and what is its purpose?

- There was a great deal of uncertainty about this question. Only two participants truly gave the correct answer.
- One responded with trepidation that The Great Commission must refer to spreading the message of salvation through Christ.
- One stated “go and preach to the world.”
- Another stated, “the call of we as humans to serve, worship and obey God’s command.”
- Still another responded it’s where God makes disciples of us. His calling on our life Luke 4:18, “the spirit is upon me I have been appointed to preach the Good News to the poor.”

- One participant stated, “I really don’t know how to answer this. I’m glad you asked, so I can think deeply on this. It’s deeper than “go and make disciples.”
- And one simply wrote a question mark.

Question #4: What does it mean to be a disciple? And how does one become a disciple?

- Five responded that disciples were followers of Christ, broken down:
- One responded that you become a disciple by believing, confessing, and living a life following Jesus’ teaching.
- One responded that you become a disciple by being a student of the word.
- One responded that you become a disciple when you confess your sin and accept Christ as the risen Savior.
- Another responded that you have to believe in Jesus and be filled with the Holy Spirit to be a disciple.
- One participant stated to become a disciple you have to be in relationship with God, not just worship and pray.
- One stated that to become a disciple is to preach the good news (Word of God).
- Still one participant stated that it is a moot question because Jesus called the disciples and one could argue that disciples are still called, but the process is less literal today.

Question #5: Who has the responsibility for carrying out The Great Commission?

- Six participants stated every Christian.

Variations were as follows:

- Three responded all that believe in Christ.
- One responded every human – Christian or not.
- One responded every follower of Christ, depending on the talents we are blessed with.
- And one participant just wrote a question mark.

The post-project survey questions and the participant answers were as follows:

Question #1: Do you feel you have a better understanding of the gospel message?

Can you provide a brief explanation?

- All six participants responded yes to this question, although there were not detailed explanations.

Question #2: Do you feel you were able to become more knowledgeable about the church's mission of making disciples for Jesus Christ? In what way?

- Five participants stated that they had become more knowledgeable, while one stated no, but did not elaborate. Some of the comments were: I feel I have gained ways to do a better job of representing Jesus to those I meet; I am able to critique what I thought I knew versus what the church at large teaches. I am more comfortable about my testimony.

Question #3: Do you believe you had enough time to gain this knowledge?

- All the participants stated that yes it was enough time, although one participant stated that they wanted more. Comments varied from one stating that attending the classes and journaling has given them their testimony that they can share with others. Another stated that God has begun placing people in their path to serve and witness. And one stated the group was great with a

lot of diversity in age, education, and spiritual experience. They loved the discourse that came with the questions and answers, and they wanted more.

Question #4: What do you believe could or should have been done differently?

Responses were:

- The order of lessons made sense.
- There is an opportunity to add more content based on the rich conversations.
- Another felt there needed to be open-ended guiding questions to help guide their thinking and processing of material.
- One felt that the videos on creation and The Passion of the Christ should have been cut out.
- One felt the format should have been lecture style and used better videos.
- And still one felt the discussions veered away from the lesson plan.

Question #5: What do you think the next steps should be?

Responses were:

- One believes that this class should be incorporated into small groups church wide.
- One stated they did not know the next step.
- One stated to build a Bible study series from the topics/questions that emerged during the class.
- Still another stated they want this level of intensive Bible study in the church, and
- One stated that they wanted in-depth discussions and need more.

Comprehensively, the data proved empirically that the hypothesis of this project was successful.

The greatest unknown for this research project was the type of participants that would be taking the training. Not to be judgmental or harsh, but there was a surety that the participants would have some biblical knowledge just based on the contextual pool of potential adherents and the location of the project execution. Surprisingly, the variation was substantial and transversed dimensions that could not have been foreseen nor could I have been able to gather this diverse group intentionally. This resulted in questions being asked that could not have been anticipated prior to the training but were extremely pertinent to important precepts of evangelism and more importantly enabled the participants and myself to encounter this task with a greater understanding of the kinds of people we may meet in this journey. The best part of this was that it caused everyone to spend a little more time thinking about, pondering, reading, and praying about the issues and ideas that were questioned. The participants are more willing now to start a conversation with someone and feel comfortable in doing so. What I am most elated about is that the training given proved to be impactful to those with little to no experience with evangelism. And there is now a genuine desire to dig deeper and know more about Jesus Christ, the gospel message and evangelism.

For future classes and further study there will need to be some aspects of the training that require more than one lesson and a greater depth into the subject matter. For example, the creation story and the first chapter of John should really be offered as a mini-series so that participants will receive a better understanding of what the gospel of John is addressing. The Trinity is another area that requires a more in-depth training

because many of the participants, including those that are experienced and biblically literate, struggle with where Jesus fits within the Trinity. Additionally, it would be beneficial to set up the classes as a series perhaps based upon biblical knowledge. Specifically, there would be training for beginners which would be a basic class, similar to the training offered in this research project. There would be an intermediate training class for participants that are a little more knowledgeable and then there would be an advanced class. The advanced class would not necessarily be based upon superior knowledge, but the written training materials would be articulated at a higher academic level versus elementary level. There could possibly be testing to determine the appropriate level for the participants.

Conclusion

The Ministry Focus Chapter reflected on how my search for a church that was still grounded in the biblical principles and steeped in the foundation of making disciples led to my uniting with St. Paul United Methodist Church. Joining as a member and not in the capacity of a leader provided the greatest insight into the church's needs and the congregation's biblical knowledge and understanding. The problem was declining membership, the lack of an evangelistic witness and the reality that the membership did not have a clear understanding that evangelism is the mission of the church. This Doctor of Ministry Research Project, "Developing a Training Model for Evangelism at St. Paul United Methodist Church, Dallas, Texas" was designed to address that need by developing a training program that would teach the participants that the mission of the church is to make disciples, and it is accomplished through evangelism.

The biblical perspective offered in Acts 1:1-8 was chosen as the foundational pericope for this doctoral research project primarily because it presented a narrative account of the methodology Jesus used to reiterate, teach, train, and prepare the disciples to be His witnesses after His resurrection. Jesus' method of evangelism was that He connected with people on a personal basis. This same passage of scripture was utilized as the content-based syllabus for the project's training. Steeped within this pericope was the two most principal factors needed for effective evangelism: the gospel message and prayer.

It was the methodical and enthusiastic zeal of Theologian and Evangelist John Wesley the noted founder of the Methodist church which provided the historical perspective for this project. What made John Wesley the ideal topic for this project was the fact that his purpose was never to put together an evangelistic program, rather it was in the simplicity of his life's journey to know and be all that he could be in Jesus Christ that proved to be his greatest evangelistic tool. His preeminent attribute was his steadfast prayer life, a commitment he never wavered from. Wesley's conversion led him to understand that the mission of the church was and is to make disciples. Wesley possessed the same quality Jesus possessed in his method of evangelism and that was that he connected with people on a personal basis.

The theological perspective that most clearly spoke to this project was evangelical theology. However, there are so many aspects to evangelical theology, especially in modern times, that it must be clearly stated that the perspective of evangelical theology chosen as the foundation for this project focused on the "good news" of salvation, that believed in the necessity of being born again, emphasized the importance of evangelism

and affirmed traditional Protestant teachings on the authority as well as the historicity of the Bible.

The interdisciplinary perspective that pulled this project together was Cognitive Behavioral Theory (CBT) which suggested that our thoughts, emotions, body sensations, and behavior are all connected and that what we think and do affects the way we feel. Truly our cognitions touch on many aspects of our daily lives. We chose to incorporate the Cognitive Behavioral Theory (CBT) approaches into the lessons specifically because CBT is a talking therapy that can help manage problems by changing the way you think and behave. Each perspective came together and enabled the hypothesis for this doctoral research project to be proven successful.

It was rewarding to witness as each participant awakened to the reality that evangelism was not as hard and foreboding as they had believed and that they were already encountering opportunities, during the project implementation, whereupon they were able to share the gospel message without feeling like they were trying to sell something. And most importantly that to do so is the mission of the church. I do feel it is necessary to add in future training the fact that we (disciples of Jesus Christ) are the church, and it does not consist of a brick-and-mortar building. The greatest reward was the hunger for more knowledge of the what the Bible writes about Jesus, the Holy Spirit and even about God the Father. And they have suggested setting up small group bible studies to go into an even deeper discussion of the scriptures that were studied during the project. This is something I am anticipating doing soon.

APPENDIX A

RESEARCH PARTICIPANT REQUEST FLYER

PARTICIPANTS NEEDED



WOULD YOU BE INTERESTED IN PARTICIPATING IN A STUDY ON EVANGELISM FOR MY DOCTOR OF MINISTRY RESEARCH PROJECT?

Who do we need?

Participants who are 18 years or older

For more information contact:

Pastor Carlene Smith

carlene2842@yahoo.com

469-305-6904

APPENDIX B
INFORMED CONSENT FORM

St. Paul United Methodist Church
 1816 Routh Street
 Dallas, TX 75201
 Rev. Dr. Lucretia Facen, Pastor
 Rev. Carlene Smith, Project Director

“Developing a Training Model for Evangelism at St. Paul United Methodist Church, Dallas, Texas”
 Informed Consent Form

Purpose: The purpose of this research project is to teach the participants about Jesus Christ and the gospel message so that the participants will become knowledgeable that evangelism is the mission of the church through an eight-week study of God’s word.

Meeting information:

We will meet every Sunday for eight weeks from 9:30 am to 10:30 am in the second-floor conference room beginning 01/21/2024 to 03/10/2024. Participants are asked to be there at least five minutes prior so that the lessons can begin on time.

Consent:

_____ I agree to participate in this project as a human research subject and that my participation is voluntary. I understand that at any point in this project I can withdraw my participation without explanation. I understand that if I elect to withdraw my participation it will have no effect on my membership at St. Paul UMC. I understand that I neither have to bear any expenses nor receive any compensation for participating.

Confidentiality:

_____ I understand that this consent form, the pre and post surveys, journals and other collected data will be maintained and stored in strict compliance with privacy in Reverend Smith’s file cabinet in her home office, located in Carrollton, Texas. All paper data will be shredded after three years.

Risks for Human Research Subjects:

_____ I do not foresee any risks in taking part in this research. I understand that my responses will be covered in anonymity, and no one will be able to deduce from my responses my exact identity. If the Project Director chooses to use quotes from my feedback, it will be done anonymously. My contributions to the study will be safeguarded from public view for the duration of the research project study.

Benefits of the Research Project:

_____ Participants will gain the knowledge that evangelism is the mission of the church and as followers of Jesus Christ, they are the disciples that Jesus commissioned to carry out the mission. This will be beneficial to the participants as they will be able to take ownership of the role they can play in bringing in new converts, not just in this context but the church universal. My hope is that the participant(s) will not only learn about the love of God but experience it as they meditate upon the scriptures. That the hope and love that grows within them as they gain knowledge of how to present themselves to a world full of hatred, loneliness, hopelessness, and despair can be shared through their witness to those that are so desperately in need. Another benefit will be that the participants will develop a better understanding and deeper relationship with Jesus Christ and His church. Prayerfully, the participant(s) will develop a hunger for the word of God and a desire to be more consistent in prayer.

If you have any questions: Please contact Reverend Smith at 469-305-6904.

 Human Research Subject Signature

 Date

 Project Director Signature

 Date

APPENDIX C
PRE-PROJECT SURVEY

Let's Talk About the Gospel Message

Pre-project Survey

Survey question #1: What is the gospel message?

Survey question #2: Who is Jesus Christ and what happened to Him?

Survey question #3: What is The Great Commission and what is its purpose?

Survey question #4: What does it mean to be a disciple? And how does one become a disciple?

Survey question #5: Who has the responsibility for carrying out The Great Commission?

APPENDIX D
POST-PROJECT SURVEY

Let's Talk About the Gospel Message

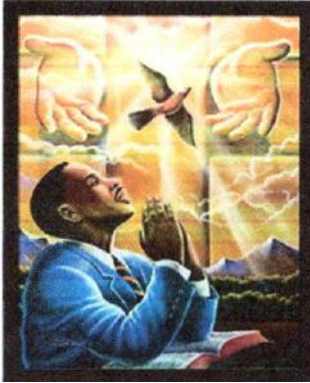
Post-project Survey

1. Do you feel you have a better understanding of the gospel message?
2. Do you feel that you were able to become more knowledgeable about the church's mission of making disciples for Jesus Christ?
3. Do you believe that you had enough time to gain this knowledge?
4. What do you believe could or should have been done differently?
5. What do you think the next steps should be?

APPENDIX E

SAMPLE OF LET’S TALK ABOUT THE GOSPEL MESSAGE LESSON

Payer and the Holy Spirit



Imagine being in an Upper Room praying for the promise that Jesus had spoken of. You have no idea what to expect, but you wait. And suddenly there comes a strong, violent, rushing wind (sounding like a tornado) that fills the room you are in. The next thing you know these little flames land on you. I would be afraid, wouldn't you?

This is what the disciples experienced in the Upper Room as they waited to be filled with the Holy Spirit.

"And when they had entered, they went up to the upper room, where they were staying; that is Peter and John and James and Andrew, Philip, and James the son of Alphaeus, and Simon the Zealot, and Judas the son of James. These all with one mind were continually devoting themselves to prayer, along with the women, and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with His brothers." Acts 1:13-14 "And when the day of Pentecost had come, they were all together in one place. And suddenly there came from heaven a noise like a violent, rushing wind, and it filled the whole house where they were sitting. And there appeared to them tongues as of fire distributing themselves, and they rested on each one of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit was giving them utterance." Acts 2:1-4

This scenario explains how the disciples and the others were baptized with the Holy Spirit. More than likely this was done to be highly effective in providing the evidence required to prove that the Holy Spirit had come, and it was done to glorify Jesus Christ. Today one can be filled with the Holy Spirit without having this particular experience. And it is important to note that the speaking in other tongues meant they were speaking other languages that were not their natural language but were the languages spoken by those around them so that it would be understood that something amazing had occurred.

The key component to this baptism in the Holy Spirit was prayer. The disciples were in prayer for approximately 10 days (Jesus was with them for 40 days after His resurrection). Hence, we always know that Pentecost is 50 days after Jesus was crucified.

Seeking the Lord in prayer does four things:

Prayer gives us understanding (Proverbs 4:7): "The beginning wisdom is: Acquire wisdom; and with all your acquiring, get understanding."

Prayer prepares us (Mark 1:35): "And in the early morning, while it was still dark, He arose and went out and departed to a lonely place and was praying there." Jesus prayed before going to the next town to preach.

Prayer strengthens us (Matthew 26:36): "Then Jesus came with them to a place called Gethsemane and said to His disciples: 'Sit here while I go over there and pray.' Jesus prayed before His suffering and crucifixion.

It is in prayer that the Lord speaks to us (Luke 6:12): "And it was at this time that He went off to the mountain to pray, and He spent the whole night in prayer to God. And when day came, He called His disciples to Him; and chose twelve of them, whom He also named as apostles."

Application

There will be a lot of information disseminated during this study and one hour teaching time is not enough time for you to fully understand each lesson. Each week you will be required to pray about the lesson for the week. I am asking you to use the prayer posture called *lectio Divina* which I got from the wonderful former pastor of St. John's Downtown UMC in Houston, TX, Rev. Juanita Rasmus. I use this posture myself and it works. I have placed a copy of it in your manuals. I am requiring you to spend at least 15 minutes per day in prayer. To be honest I believe you will find yourself spending more time in prayer than you would ever think possible. Keep your journals with you and write in them as you receive understanding and knowledge from this prayer posture. You may find yourself with questions — write that down so that we may discuss it. But assuredly write down the insight you receive from the Holy Spirit.

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